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ABSTRACT

These home learning activity guides have been developed for parents to use with their 4-year-old children. Most of the activities require only household items that are often thrown away and can be recycled for learning activities. Some require no materials at all. The guides frequently begin with a discussion of home activities; progress through activities for exploration, listening, and understanding; and end with activities for application and expression. Activities focus on self-awareness; things one can learn at home; the seasons; listening and memory; the senses of taste, touch, and vision; transportation; building; boxes and bags; animals; space; story time; and nature. (RH)

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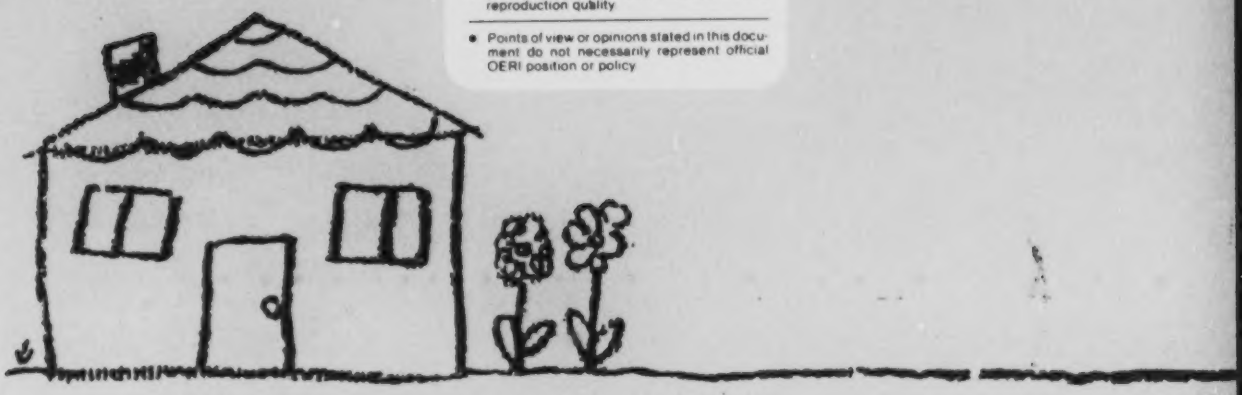

HOME ACTIVITIES for Fours

PS 019138

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Ferguson-Florissant School District

Early Education Program

HOME ACTIVITIES FOR FOURS

For Parents

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EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM
1005 Waterford Drive
Florissant MO 63033

Telephone: (314) 831-8809

HOME ACTIVITIES for Fours

These Home Activity Guides have been developed for use by parents with their four-year-old children.

As part of our Parent-Child Early Education Program, teachers make weekly home teaching visits for the purposes of providing learning experiences appropriate for the young child. The teacher demonstrates teaching techniques and parents are involved in the learning activities. As follow-up to the visit, activity guides provide an array of experiences for parent and child to do together.

Emphasis is on the process of learning:

Explore and Discover
Listen and Understand
Apply and Express

The teacher shares information from the guide with the parents. Thoughts about learning, based on the "Dear Parent" column, are discussed and certain activities are pointed out as being appropriate for a particular child. Throughout the guides, we convey the need for informality and showing that learning can be fun.

These guides were developed by a dedicated staff working with young children. This experienced group of people has been successful because of:

- their respect for the child and parent
- their individual attention and "specialness" to the family
- their skill in providing rich learning experiences that are based on how children learn
- their understanding of the importance of the process of learning.

Judy Brown
Mary Caslin
Janet Dial
Jackie Kavanaugh
Ruby Kersey
Rita Powers
Cheryl Prante
Shirley Stenberg

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1005 Waterford Drive
Florissant, Missouri 63033

Early Education Program
(314) 831-8809

ME!

Home Activities

Dear Parent and Partner:

If you feel concerned about joining us as a teaching partner, relax! We consider it our pleasure to join you. After all, who knows your child better than you? Who better than you can read your child's moods and know when it's time to introduce something new, or when it's time to stop because he's had enough. And who, after all, has been his teacher for the past four years? YOU!

You have just what we look for in a teacher—experience and caring about the child. The only thing you need are ideas, and that's what this weekly Home Activity Guide is designed to supply. The activities in the guides will be divided into three sections: Explore and Discover, Listen and Understand, Apply and Express. There is a sequence to learning. First, children learn best when they use their five senses to *explore* and *discover* in a relaxed environment. Next, children need lots of opportunities to *listen* to information before they *understand* new concepts. Finally, they are ready to use their new knowledge to *apply* and *express* what they have learned by speaking, acting out, writing and drawing. You'll find we actually suggest more ideas than we expect you to use, so you and your child's other teacher can decide which ones are best suited for your child.

Most of the activities require only "throw-away" household items which can be recycled for learning. Some require no materials at all. Sometimes just providing crayons and paper, a little how-to advice and a lot of praise is all there is to it. In fact, some of your best teaching can be done while you're doing something else. That's why we purposely will suggest some learning kinds of things to do while you're at it—while you're sorting clothes, cooking supper, riding in the car or shopping at the store.

But no matter where you are or what you are teaching, keep it fun! The game-like activities should be a pleasure for both of you. For while you are teaching your child that round things are called circles, you're also teaching him something far more important—*that learning is a joy.*

We look forward to working with you this year and sharing the pleasure of seeing your child grow.

Notes to Parents

Your child is special. There is no one exactly like him. He's a very unique person. He needs to know that. You'll be helping your child develop what psychologists call self-awareness by doing activities with him.

Activities that will help him:

- Appreciate more fully how amazing his body is.
- Understand his feelings and emotions.
- Learn the names of body parts.
- Gain an understanding of what each body part can do.
- Learn to listen and enjoy books.

Explore and Discover

Children learn best when given an opportunity to explore.

Look At Me

Before a large mirror, have your child take a look at herself—front, side, back. Can she point to parts of her body? Which can she name? Which does she need to learn? One by one, teach her the parts she cannot name in this way:

- Touch her body part as you name it. Always have her repeat after you – "Elbow."
- Then say, "Show me *my* elbow. Show me *your* elbow."
- Touch her elbow and ask, "What is this?" Can she name it? Then with eyes closed, can she name the part you touch?

Let's Explore Movement

It's important for children to be creative problem-solvers. You can give your child some problems he can solve using different body movements.

Ask him:

- How many ways can you move your hand? Foot? Ex., shake, make a fist, wave.
- How many body parts can you move up and down?
- How many parts can you bend?

Give your child time to think of ways to move. Encourage him to show you more ways.

What's Inside of Me?

Have your child feel her own heartbeat for a while; then ask her to tap out the rhythm with her hand or foot. Have her hop around the room and then feel her heartbeat again. Is it faster or slower? Sit down quietly for a while. Is it still the same?

Show her other places where she can feel the beat of her heart (called pulses). The temple (by the eyebrows), the wrist, the right and left side of the throat. Have her feel yours, too. Do they beat at the same rhythm as yours?

Other Invisible Parts: There are invisible parts inside of your child she can't see but can feel. Have her feel some of them:

- Bones in her wrist, elbow, knee, ankle.
- Her throat as she swallows.
- Her jaws as she opens and closes her mouth. Can she hear her mouth open and close?

Listen and Understand

Remember, children need lots of opportunities to listen to information before they understand new concepts.

Look What I Can Do!

Is your child fully aware of the amazing things her body can do? Does she know the function of all her body parts? (See list).

In front of a large mirror, let your child see herself walk, run, jump, sit, bend, move her arms all about. Then, one by one, talk about each body part: what it can do and what would happen if the body part did *not* do its job. For example:

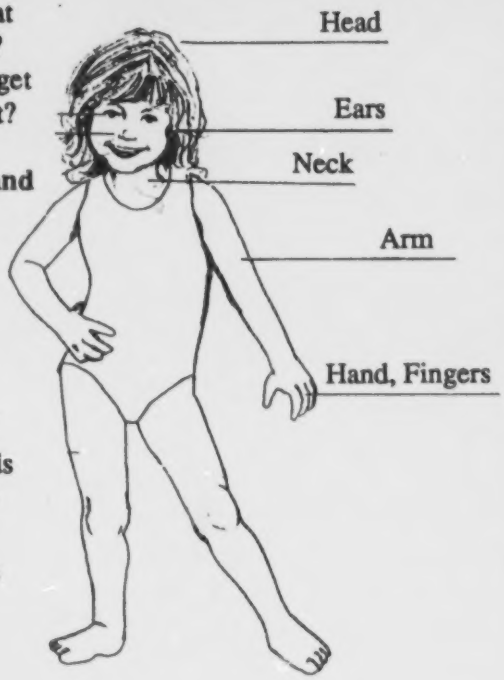
What does the *neck* do? Turn your head back and forth. See the neck move? Hold your neck stiff. Can the head turn? Look up? Down?

What does the *elbow* do? Eat a cookie. See the elbow bend? Hold your arm stiff. Can you get your hand to your mouth to eat?

Different Parts of the Body and Their Function:

Teach these body parts first.

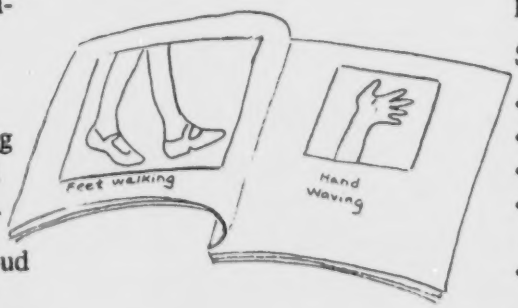
Ears – hearing
Nose – smelling, breathing
Mouth, Lips, Tongue, Teeth – eating talking
Arm – reaching, holding
Hand, Fingers – picks up, holds
Legs – stand, walk, run, climb
Feet – walk, stand, run, jump
Trunk – bends twists, stretches
Skin – covers body
Head – thinks
Hair – covers head
Eyelashes – protect eyes
Eyebrows – shows expression
Chin – allows mouth to open and close
Neck – moves head
Elbow – lets arm bend
Wrist – turns hand
Knees – helps legs bend
Toes – helps us stand, walk
Ankles – helps us bend foot
Heels – helps us walk and balance



Note to Parents

Learning to listen is important for your child. Reading aloud develops this skill. Each week your child will pick a library book which you can read to him. Reading aloud develops a feeling of closeness between parent and child. It makes him feel special.

Research shows that reading aloud to your child is the best way to help him be a good reader later on and to develop a love of reading.



Make A Face

Present situations to your child and ask him to show you with his face how he would feel (happy, sad).

Ask him to look into a mirror when he makes faces. Examples are:

Show me how you would feel:

- If Grandma gave you a present.
- If you cut your finger.
- If you went to a carnival.
- If mom or dad left you with a sitter.
- If you broke a toy.

Can he then tell you how he feels using the words "happy" or "sad?"

Apply and Express

Children need opportunities to apply their new knowledge and express it in various ways.

Create a Handbook

Ask your child to show you how many things he can do with his hands.

Cut out pictures in magazines of people using their hands in different ways. Your child can paste one picture on each page to make a book. Let him tell you what the people in the pictures are doing and write down his answer. You can do the same with feet!

Tear Your Hair

Encourage your child to draw a picture of his face. *He* can *then* tear tiny bits of colored paper to glue on for hair. Tearing helps develop muscles in the fingers that are used for writing.

It's In the Bag

Choose different clothing worn by different members of the family and place in a large brown grocery bag. You and your child can take turns picking an item of clothing. Tell on which part or parts of the body the clothing is worn.

To make this more challenging, talk about clothing worn above or below the waist.

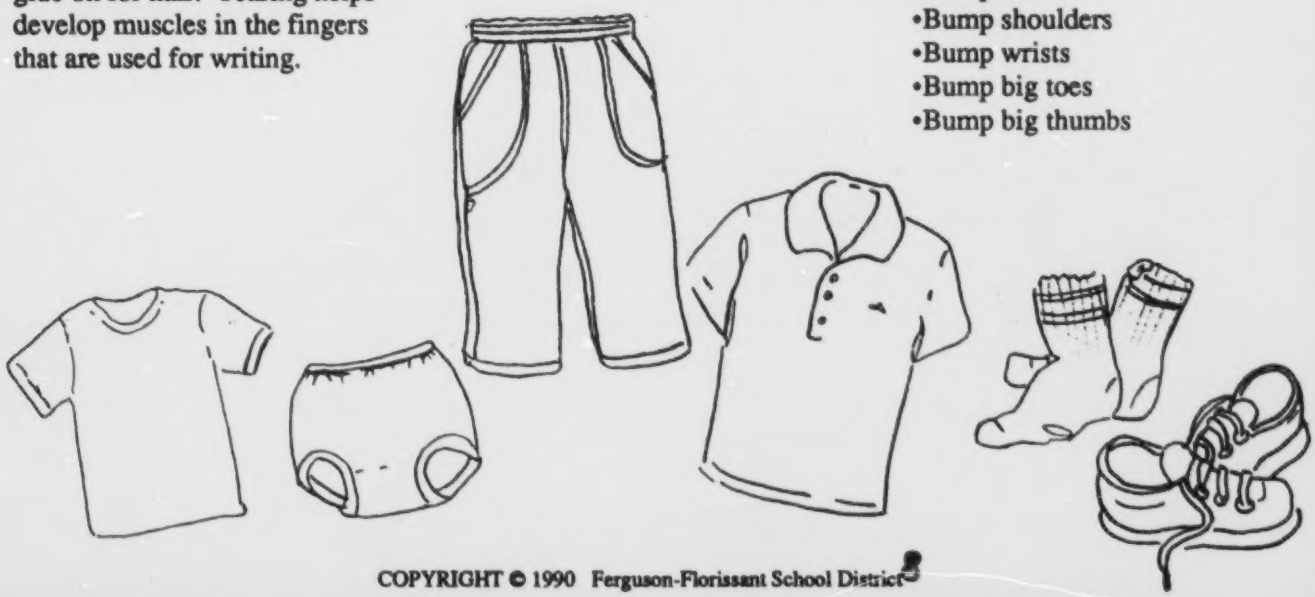
Ears, Nose, Fingers, Toes

Talk to your child about how many body parts he has. How many eyes do you have? How many fingers do you have, etc. Touch and count them. Do you have more fingers or ears? Do you have less toes or legs? Less is a difficult skill and your child may need practice. To challenge your child further, talk about pairs of body parts. A pair means two of the same thing.

Bump a Pair

Play bump a pair with your child. Call out a pair of body parts and you and your child must bump those parts together. Say:

- Bump hips
- Bump hands
- Bump feet
- Bump knees
- Bump elbows
- Bump shoulders
- Bump wrists
- Bump big toes
- Bump big thumbs



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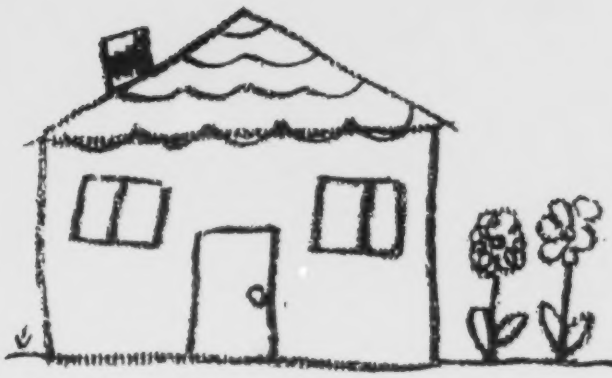


Home

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

This Home Activity Guide is centered around activities for you and your child to do in his own environment. The best place for a child to learn new ideas is right here in *your own home!* Without realizing it, you have taught your child an amazing amount of knowledge:

- How to label things in his environment
- How to communicate his needs and express his own ideas
- How to dress and be responsible for himself and his actions
- How to ride a big wheel or climb on a swing set
- How to appreciate and wonder at the world around him

Your child has learned these skills informally and spontaneously from you—the most important person in his world. The activities in this guide are designed to be presented in the same informal and spontaneous manner. They are meant to be fun and promote interaction between you and your child.

Many of these skills have been learned through play. To children, play is their work. Building with blocks, working puzzles, pretending with a toy, having a tea party with Mom and Teddy Bear and dressing up in old clothes help children solve problems, share, discover new concepts and build relationships with other people. Play helps children to make sense and order out of their world.

In the home, parents serve as a role model for their children. Placing a high value on education shows children that *learning* is important. Reading books, magazines, and newspapers demonstrates that you enjoy reading and value its importance. It also tells children that you are a learner *too!*

Explore and Discover

In Your Child's Room

Your child's room is a treasure chest of teaching tools. Appropriate toys can be used in many ways. Puzzles provide a chance to talk about the whole picture. Children need to see the whole picture before it can be taken apart and put back together. Blocks can be used not only to build with, but to sort into like colors or shapes and to make designs. Sometimes, the best toy of all is a large, empty box. Children like to climb in and let their imagination take off. It can be anything from a car or airplane to a spaceship headed for the moon. With a large box, all that's needed are crayons, markers, scissors and a little imagination to turn the box into a play house. Remember, toys need to encourage children to experiment, pretend and solve problems. Toys need not be expensive. A well-loved teddy bear can be a special friend to care for and talk to as a child grows up.

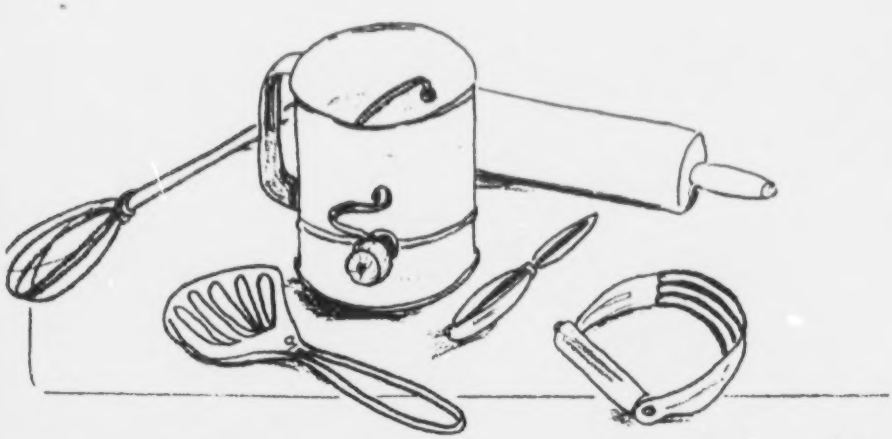
In the Kitchen

Most of us have fond memories of spending time with our family in the kitchen. The kitchen reminds us of cookies baking in the oven, exploring with pots and pans, helping cook special foods and gathering around the kitchen table to share stories and play games. The kitchen is a wonderful place to build special memories for your child. Many of the kitchen activities can be done on the spur of the moment as you're cooking dinner, emptying the dishwasher or drinking a cup of coffee.

Kitchen Utensils

Gather an assortment of kitchen utensils for your child to experiment with, such as:

egg beater
pie dough kneader
cookie cutters
a whisk
pancake turner
rolling pin
potato peeler
egg separator
slotted spoon



Give your child a chance to find out on his own what the utensil does. Encourage him to describe what he sees happening, as well as to think of other ways the same utensil could be used. One utensil that children especially enjoy using is a flour sifter. Spooning flour into a measuring cup, pouring the flour into the sifter and then turning the handle also helps build eye-hand coordination.

Kitchen Containers

Experimenting with water and different size containers not only helps a child learn *how* to pour but is laying a foundation for the concept of volume. What happens when you pour a full glass of water into a larger jar, a smaller jar or a different shaped jar?

Jars and Lids

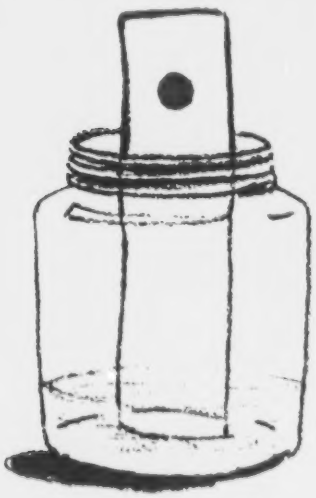
Make a collection of different jars and their lids. (Pots and plastic containers may also be used.) The child puts the correct lid on each container.

Begin by saying, "Can you put these together?" "Do you think this lid could fit this jar?" "Why not?" "Do you think the lid is too small—or too large?" "How about this one?" "Try it and see. Good!"

This activity develops the child's ability to make comparisons and predictions.

What A Surprise!

Cut a one-inch wide strip of paper from a coffee filter or paper towel. Fill a glass or baby food jar about one-fourth full of water. Tell your child to put a small dot of food coloring about three-fourths of the way up from the bottom of the strip. When the dot is dry, tell the child to place the strip in the glass of water with the dot near the top. Watch the water soak into the paper and dissolve the color.



Remove the paper from the water after the dot has completely dissolved and the color has carried up the paper in varying shades. Allow it to dry. Talk about the color array with your child. "Show me where the color is the lightest shade. Show me where it is the darkest."

In the Bathroom

The bathtub is another great place for your child to explore with water. She can investigate how to made bubbles or try pouring water from one container to another.

Floaters and Sinkers

Children enjoy experimenting with objects to see if they float or sink.

You and your child need to make a collection of objects that will not be damaged by water. Examples:

sponge	washcloth
soap	Ivory soap
toy boat	toy car
egg carton	

Before getting into the tub, have your child sort the collection into things she thinks will float (stay on top of the water) and things that will sink (go to the bottom of the tub). While in the tub, hand her the things (one at a time) she thought would float. Now, let her test the sinkers. Did they all sink? Did any object surprise her?

To make this activity more challenging, see if she can find a floater that can be used to support an object that would otherwise sink.

Parent Note:

Not everything that floats will keep another object afloat. Weight, shape, size and balance are all factors to be considered. The more she does this activity, the better she will be at predicting what will keep things afloat.

In the Garage or Basement

The garage and basement always fascinate children. They are places of mystery and surprise. You never know when you're going to find a lost toy, a creepy, crawly bug or an animal taking refuge from outside.

Grandpa's Tool Box

Exploring what tools can do is a great activity. It is important to have a grown-up nearby to demonstrate how a tool works and to check that it is being used safely.

Help your child collect a hammer, an assortment of nails, screwdriver, screws, saw, and a board of soft wood.

Demonstrate how to hold the hammer and nail so it can be driven into the board. Start the nail for the child and let her pound it into the board.

Explore how the other tools are used.

Note to Parents:

This is a good fine motor activity for children who don't enjoy drawing, cutting or pasting.

Listen and Understand

Everyday Colors

Color can be a very confusing concept for children. Blue can vary from the dark blue color of jeans to the light blue stripe on their shirt. This is true for all colors. Earlier in this issue, the "What A Surprise" activity introduced children to the concept that there are different shades of a color. Use this new information to go on a color hunt. Begin by selecting *one color* and hunt for all the different shades of that color your child can find. On another day, repeat by looking for a new color. Expand his understanding of color by using descriptive labels such as light blue, dark blue, violet, lavender, scarlet or magenta.

Note:

If your child is having difficulty learning the simple names of colors such as red or blue, stick with one color and provide your child with many opportunities to hear you describing objects by that color. Example: "I made *red* jello for lunch." "Would you like a *red* popsicle today?" "Wear your *red* shirt to play in today."

When your child can consistently identify the color you've been working on, move to another color.

Circle Safari

Ask your child to put on his pretend safari hat and binoculars. Sit on the floor next to your child and take turns sighting and pointing out objects that are round circles.

Give your child 5-10 paper circles. Have your child walk around the room and tape his circles to the round objects in the room. As the child names the things that have been tagged, record them on a list. At a later time, ask your child to tell you what circle things he remembers.

Note:

To make this activity more challenging, ask your child to pretend he's at the zoo. "What could you see at the zoo that would be a circle?"

In the Kitchen

Your child loves to do adult tasks. Allowing him to help you do the following tasks develops the small muscles in his fingers and hands:

1. Folding towels or napkins
2. Drying silverware
3. Pouring liquids such as milk or juice
4. Mixing food
5. Scrubbing the sink
6. Scrubbing the floor
7. Polishing the silver
8. Chopping vegetabies
9. Sorting silverware

Silverware Sorting

After doing the mealtime dishes, let your child sort the silverware and place it in its proper place. (This activity may be done by sorting like silverware on the table.) As he sorts the silverware, ask what each piece is used for. (Examples: knife to cut, fork to stick, spoon to eat cereal.) Help your child notice that silverware is made from different materials such as plastic, wood, metal, etc.

Size Wise

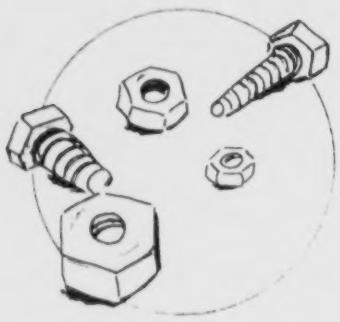
Comparing objects by size is a math skill your child will use throughout his life. It requires him to make judgments and solve problems. Collec objects that come in three different sizes, such as kitchen bowls, measuring spoons, cereal boxes, cans, or even towels. Demonstrate how to put three objects in order from the smallest to the largest. Ask your child to put the remaining groups of objects in order from the smallest to the largest.

Note:

Using four or five items to be compared makes this game more challenging.

Nuts and Bolts

Nuts and bolds from the tool box can help your child build strength in her fingers and wrists. They also help her differentiate between sizes and shapes.



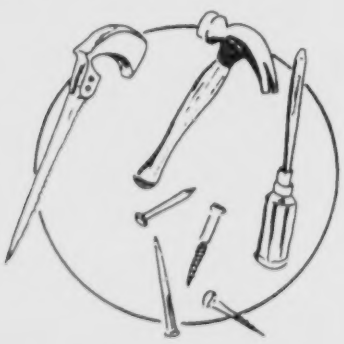
Gather a collection of various-sized nuts and bolts, making sure that each nut has a matching bolt.

Say, "Look at this nut. See how big it is. Can you find a bolt that would screw onto it? Try it. Twist this nut onto the bolt. Now, see how many nuts and bolts you can screw together."

Tool Shapes

Make a collection of tools. Take a large piece of paper (an open grocery sack is about the right size) and draw around each tool to make its outline. Put the tools in a box.

Then ask your child to take the tools out of the box one at a time and name them. He then tries to place the tool on its outline.



You might discuss this activity as follows:

- "Can you find the shape of the hammer on the paper?"
- "Why did you choose this outline? Try it and see. Does it fit? Good! Find where all the tools go."

When all the tools are matched to their outlines, you might ask:

- "Show me all the tools with handles."
- "Find something that cuts."
- "Show me all the tools that help us put things together."

Let's Get Dressed

You can help your child begin to work from left to right by laying his clothes out in the order that they are put on. Working from left to right is a skill your child will need when learning to read and write.

Sort the Clothes

Before washing the clothes, let your child help you sort them. Show him how to put all the towels in one pile, all the underwear and white and dark clothing in separate piles. Not only has your child been helping you with the laundry, he has been classifying and sorting objects into sets.

After the wash is dry, show your child how to sort the clothes to be put away. Clothes can be sorted in various ways, such as by:

- Colors
- Season (winter and summer clothes)
- Who it belongs to
- Where it goes (which room in the house)

Treasure Hunt

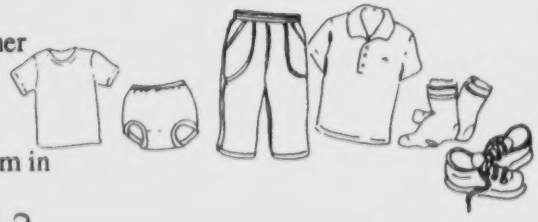
Searching for a special treasure hidden somewhere in the house is a great activity to do on a rainy day. Your child can build new vocabulary words, work on math skills and help improve listening and memory.

Write directions for the treasure hunt and hide them in various rooms of the house. To begin the hunt, you might say: "Look under the biggest chair in the living room." There the child finds a new clue for you to read, such as:

- "Look under the cushion on the sofa."
- "Look behind the curtains in your bedroom."
- "Take five giant steps and look under the nearest piece of furniture."
- "Look in the second drawer of your dresser."

Use the clues to make your child hunt through all of the rooms in your house until he finds the special treasure hidden in the last place he looks. The treasure might be something as simple as a granola bar or, on special occasions, a small gift.

The clues can introduce new vocabulary words such as: breakfront, dresser, or davenport (couch); reinforce position words such as: behind, in back of, or beside; and encourage careful listening.



Apply and Express

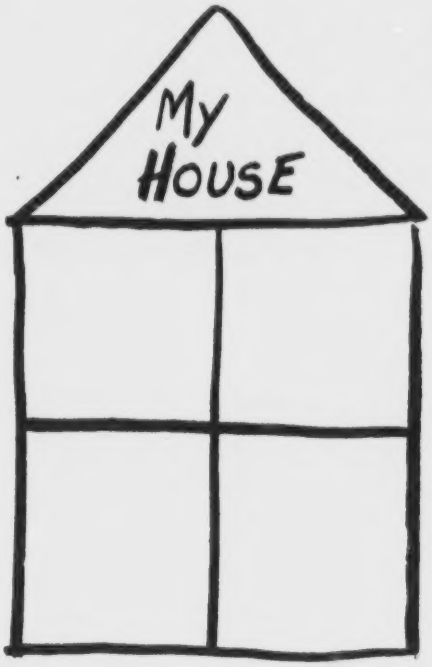
Mixing Up A Rainbow

This activity is great for children who don't like getting their hands messy. By putting the following rainbow color mixture into a sealed bag, children squeeze and knead, making new colors without ever getting their hands sticky.

Recipe for Mixing Up A Rainbow:

1. Measure:
   1/3 c. sugar
   1 c. cornstarch
   4 c. cold water
2. Heat the mixture until it begins to thicken, stirring constantly. Cool.
3. Once the mixture has cooled, divide it into three parts. Use food coloring to make each part a different color (such as yellow, blue, and red).
4. Add 3 heaping tablespoons of each color to a bag that zips closed.

Your child is now ready to experiment with the dough, kneading it into a rainbow of colors. Vary the activity by changing the amount used of each color mixture and see what happens. If you plan on keeping the color mixtures, store in the refrigerator.



Color Collage

Let your child see how the color green can vary. Tell your child, "Look through magazines, and cut out all the green things and paste them on a piece of paper." Talk about the colors: some are lighter, some are darker; some have different names—dark green, light green, blue-green, lime green, etc.

A fun way to stick the pictures on paper is to make stamps by following the recipe below:

Boil 2 T. lime gelatin with 2 T. water

When cool, apply to back of picture cutouts with fingertip.

When it dries, lick the back and stick it down!

Note: This works on shiny magazine pictures only.

My House Poster

For this activity, you will need magazines or newspaper ads, scissors, paste, crayons or markers, and a large piece of paper or a grocery sack.

Cut the grocery bag open and help your child draw a large house on it, similar to the one above. Help your child look through the magazines or ads and find furniture pictures. Help your child cut them out. Using your house drawing as a game board, let your child decide which section will be the living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. Pick a picture from the pile of furniture pictures. Name the furniture and tell in which room it belongs. ("This is a stove and it goes in the kitchen.") Place it on the section designated as the kitchen. Your child picks a picture next, names it, tells where it belongs and places it on the correct section. The game continues until all the pictures are used.

After you and your child have played this game several times, allow your child to paste the pictures in the room sections.

Targeting

Eye-hand coordination is a skill that helps your child get ready to write. Many activities that promote tracking (follow a moving object with your eyes) and eye-hand coordination can easily be done with everyday household objects.

Balloons

Ask your child to see how long he can keep the balloon in the air by batting it with his hand. Vary the activity by using a *stiff* paper plate to bat the balloon. Encourage your child to use both hands to bat the balloon.

Socks

Roll up a pair of socks and tie a four- to five-foot length of string on the end of the socks. Swing the socks back and forth, letting your child follow the socks with his eyes and batting it with one hand and then the other. Hold the string closer to the ground and let your child kick the sock as it swings close to him using first one foot and then the other.

Flashlight Tag

You will need flashlights for you and your child and a dark room. Begin by shining your flashlight on the wall. See if your child can use his flashlight to catch yours by touching it with his light beam. As you move your flashlight, he must follow your light with his. To make the game more interesting, switch places and chase your child's light with your flashlight.

Newspaper

Ask your child to crumple up a piece of newspaper to make a ball. Use tape to hold the ball in shape. This ball is great to use indoors for throwing and catching (it's soft and children won't be afraid to try and catch it). Take an empty laundry basket and see if your child can throw the ball into the basket. Begin by having your child stand close to the basket and then gradually moving farther away. This activity can also be done with a pair of rolled-up socks.

Tea Party

What could be more fun than planning a tea party with your child? By letting your child decide who to invite and what kind of food to serve, you are helping make decisions. Decorating the invitations, setting the table, and helping prepare the food are building fine motor skills. (He doesn't even know it!) The tea party itself is a great way to promote interaction between you and your child and/or other children. Dressing up or using stuffed animals encourages your child's imagination. Pour the Kool-aid, serve the cookies, and *Have Fun!*

What are some good toys and play materials for young children?

All ages are approximate. Most suggestions for younger children are also appropriate for older children.

	Sensory Materials	Active Play Equipment	Construction Materials	Manipulative Toys
2-year-olds and young 3's	Water and sand toys: cups, shovels Modeling dough Sound-matching games Bells, wood block, triangle, drum Texture-matching games, feel box	Low climber Canvas swing Low slide Wagon, cart or wheelbarrow Large rubber balls Low 3-wheeled, steerable vehicle with pedals	Unit blocks and accessories: animals, people, simple wood cars and trucks Interlocking construction set with large pieces Wood train and track set Hammer (13 oz. steel shanked), soft wood, roofing nails, nailing block	Wooden puzzles with 4 - 20 large pieces Pegboards Big beads or spools to string Sewing cards Stacking toys Picture lotto, picture dominoes
Older 3's and 4-year-olds	Water toys: measuring cups, egg beaters Sand toys: muffin tins, vehicles Xylophone, maracas, tambourine Potter's clay	Larger 3-wheeled riding vehicle Roller skates Climbing structure Rope or tire swing Plastic bats and balls Various-sized rubber balls Balance board Planks, boxes, old tires Bowling pins, ring toss, bean bags and target	More unit blocks, shapes and accessories Table blocks Realistic model vehicles Construction set with smaller pieces Woodworking bench, saw, sandpaper, nails	Puzzles, pegboard, small beads to string Parquetry blocks Small objects to sort Marbles Magnifying glass Simple card or board games Flannel board with pictures, letters Sturdy letters and numbers
5- and 6-year-olds	Water toys: food coloring, pumps, funnels Sand toys: containers, utensils Harmonica, kazoo, guitar, recorder Tools for working with clay	Bicycle Outdoor games, bocce, tetherball, shuffleboard, jumprope, Frisbee	More unit blocks, shapes and accessories Props for roads, towns Hollow blocks Brace and bits, screwdrivers, screws, metric measure, accessories	More complex puzzles Dominoes More difficult board and card games Yarn, big needles, mesh fabric, weaving materials Magnets, balances Attribute blocks

	Dolls and Dramatic Play	Books and Recordings	Art Materials
2-year-olds and young 3's	Washable dolls with a few clothes Doll bed Child-sized table and chairs Dishes, pots and pans Dress-up clothes: hats, shoes, shirts Hand puppets Shopping cart	Clear picture books, stories and poems about things children know Records or tapes of classical music, folk music or children's songs	Wide-tipped watercolor markers Large sheets of paper, easel Finger or tempera paint, 1/2" brushes Blunt-nosed scissors White glue
Older 3's and 4-year-olds	Dolls and accessories Doll carriage Child-sized stove or sink More dress-up clothes Play food, cardboard cartons Airport, doll house or other settings with accessories Finger or stick puppets	Simple science books More detailed picture and story books Sturdy record or tape player Recordings of wider variety of music Book and recording sets	Easel, narrower brushes Thick crayons, chalk Paste, tape with dispenser Collage materials
5- and 6-year-olds	Cash register, play money, accessories or props for other dramatic play settings: gas station, construction, office Typewriter	Books on cultures Stories with chapters Favorite stories children can read Children's recipe books	Watercolors, smaller paper, stapler, hole puncher Chalkboard Old crayons, paint crayons, charcoal Simple camera, film

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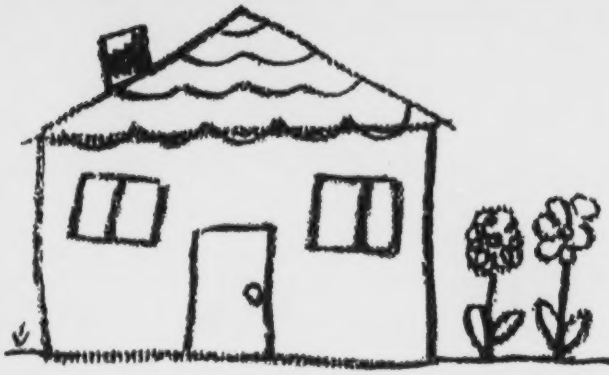


Fall

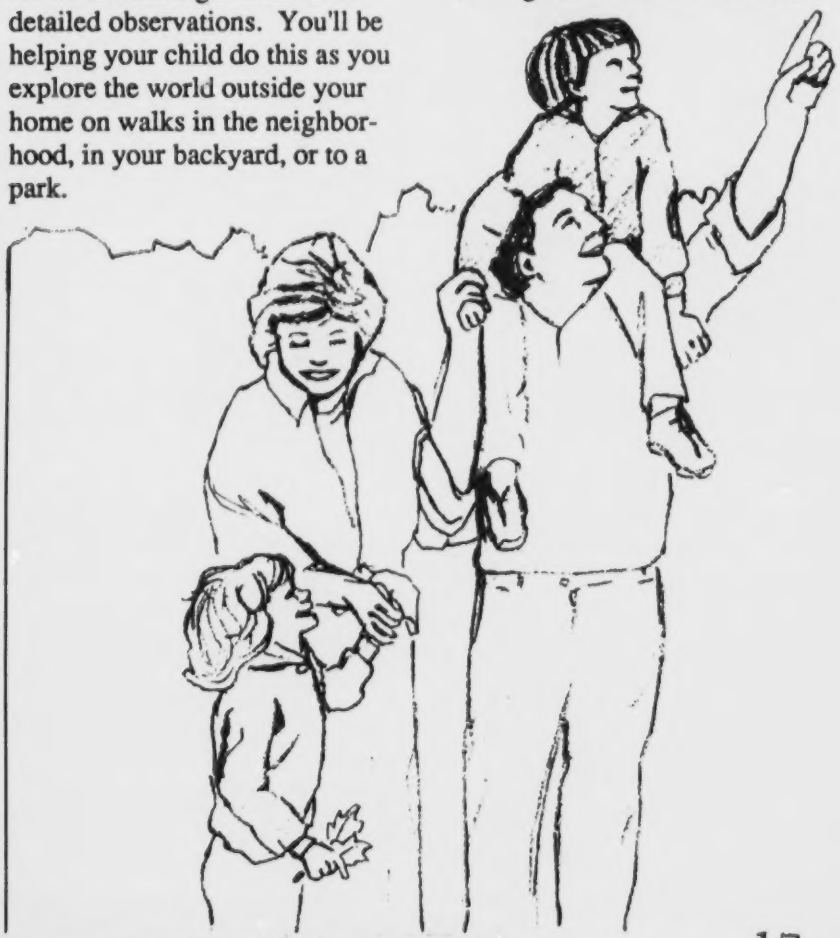
Home Activities

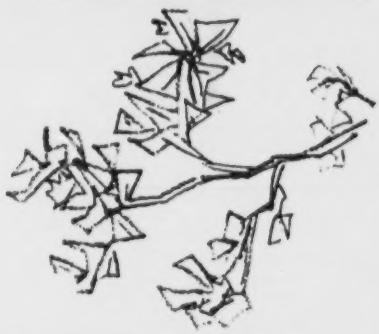
Dear Parents:

Fall is a special time of the year because of all the seemingly magical changes that happen to leaves and trees, grasses and seeds. It's a wonderful time for you to introduce your child to the scientific process.

All scientists begin with close detailed observations. You'll be helping your child do this as you explore the world outside your home on walks in the neighborhood, in your backyard, or to a park.

After closely examining details and comparing objects as to size, shape, color and a myriad of ways, the budding scientist should then begin to measure what he sees in some way and record his observations. He can record, with your help, in a written form or just by talking about what he has seen.





Help your child to use all his senses as he discovers what makes Fall such a special time of year.

Help him observe:

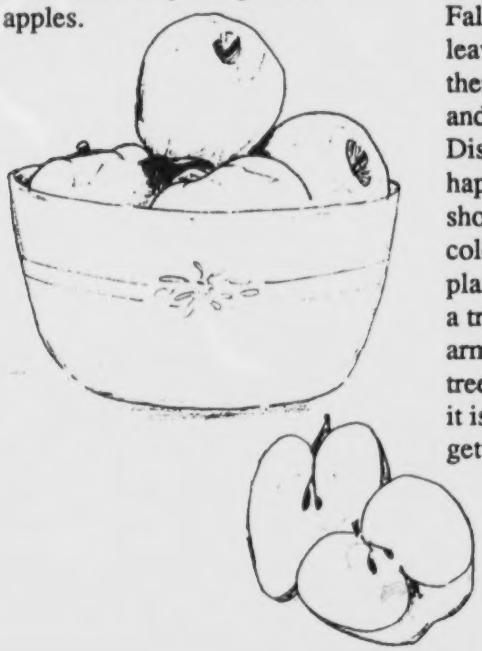
- The spicy fall smells - leaves burning or lying in piles in the sun.
- The tastes of fall - sweet pumpkin pies and crunchy tart apples.
- The changes in fall that you observe with your eyes - the brilliant colors red, yellow, orange, magenta!
- The sounds of leaves as you crunch them beneath your feet.
- The feel of fall - smooth shiny apples, rough pine cones and chestnuts in their prickly burrs; dry leaves that crumble at a touch; wet pulp inside a huge pumpkin.

Helping your child use all his senses to explore his world in the fall will provide him with rich language and concepts on which to build future learning.

Explore and Discover

Apples, Apples, Everywhere

Fall is the season for apples. Buy some apples at the store or take your child to a farm to pick apples. At home use all the senses to explore an apple. First, have your child use his eyes to look at an apple, inside and outside, and discuss the color and shape. Talk about the stem and leaves. What did you find inside the apple? What could you do with the seeds? Feel the apple with your fingers. Is it hard, soft, rough or smooth? After you cut it in half, smell it. How does it smell? Take a bite. How does it taste - sweet, sour, crunchy or creamy? Shake the apple. Does it make a noise? Can you hear anything? Using all five of our senses helps us to discover and learn many things about apples.



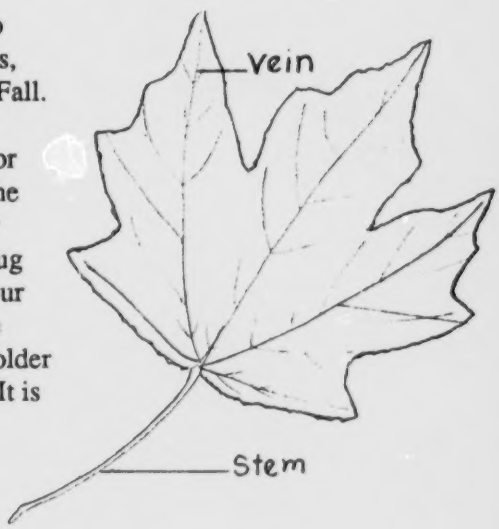
Fall Walk

Take a walk with your child - on the school grounds, in their own yards, in the park, or around the neighborhood to look for signs of Fall. Talk with him about the leaves and what's happening to them. Look for seed pods, nuts, and flowers that appear in the Fall. Discuss the grass and what is happening to it now. Is it tall or short? What is happening to the color? Can you find any other plants? How old are trees? Hug a tree with your arms. Will your arms go all the way around the tree? The bigger the tree, the older it is. Talk about the weather. It is getting cooler.

A Leaf Rubbing

- Find a large sturdy leaf and tape it to the table.
- Place a piece of typing paper or some other thin paper over the leaf and rub it with a crayon.
- The outline of the leaf should appear as you both work on the rubbing.

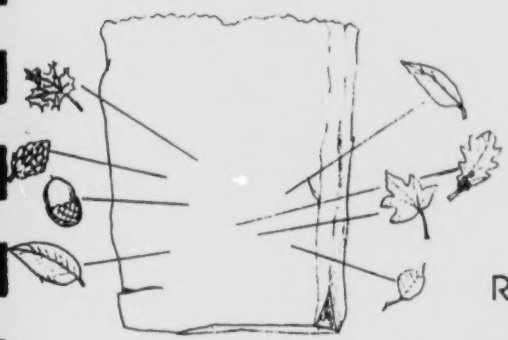
This is a good chance for you to discuss with your child the vocabulary of the parts of a leaf. The lines inside the leaf are the veins. Talk about the stem. We have veins, too. Look for the veins on your arm, your child's arm and the leaf. What's different about a leaf's veins and our veins? (A hard question.) The veins carry food and water to all parts of the leaf.



Listen and Understand

Scavenger Hunt

Plan a scavenger hunt for your child. She will need a bag to collect the objects she finds. Make a list of nature objects to hunt for in your backyard, around the neighborhood, or in the park.



Possible nature items to look for might include:

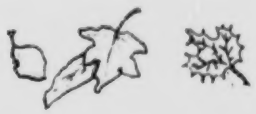
- A big yellow leaf
- A tiny red leaf
- A shiny leaf
- A leaf that feels fuzzy
- A leaf with something growing on it
- A leaf with holes in it
- A hard nut
- A rough pine cone or piece of bark

Make sure the list contains a wide variety of fall items with at least ten leaves. One at a time, read the items your child is to hunt for. Continue until as many items as possible have been found. Save the nature items for the next activity.

Raking Leaves

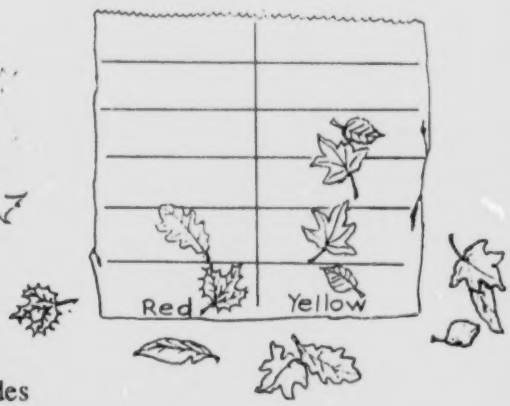
Children enjoy helping parents rake leaves. This activity provides physical exercise and builds upper body strength. More importantly, it's fun! Help your child rake a pile of leaves. Now, ask him to rake a larger pile of leaves. Which pile has more leaves? Which pile has less? Give directions for your child to follow:

- Jump in the big pile.
- Jump over the little pile.
- Run through the big pile.
- Crawl through the little pile.
- Step over the big pile.
- Bend over the little pile.
- Walk around the big pile.
- Hop around the little pile.



Graphing

Graphing is one way in which children can visually compare the items that they have found. To make your graph, use a brown grocery bag cut open to lay flat. Draw or tape lines on the bag as follows:



Spread out the items found in the scavenger hunt. Begin by placing a red leaf on the bottom of one side and a yellow leaf on the bottom of the other side. Ask your child to place all the red leaves (one leaf per square) on one side of the graph and all the yellow leaves on the other side. Are both colors of leaves at the same level on the graph? Which color has more leaves? Which color has less?

Using the same nature items, graph leaves that are big and little. Repeat, comparing two different shapes of leaves.

What other ways can you graph your nature items?

Apply and Express

Seeds that Float and Sink

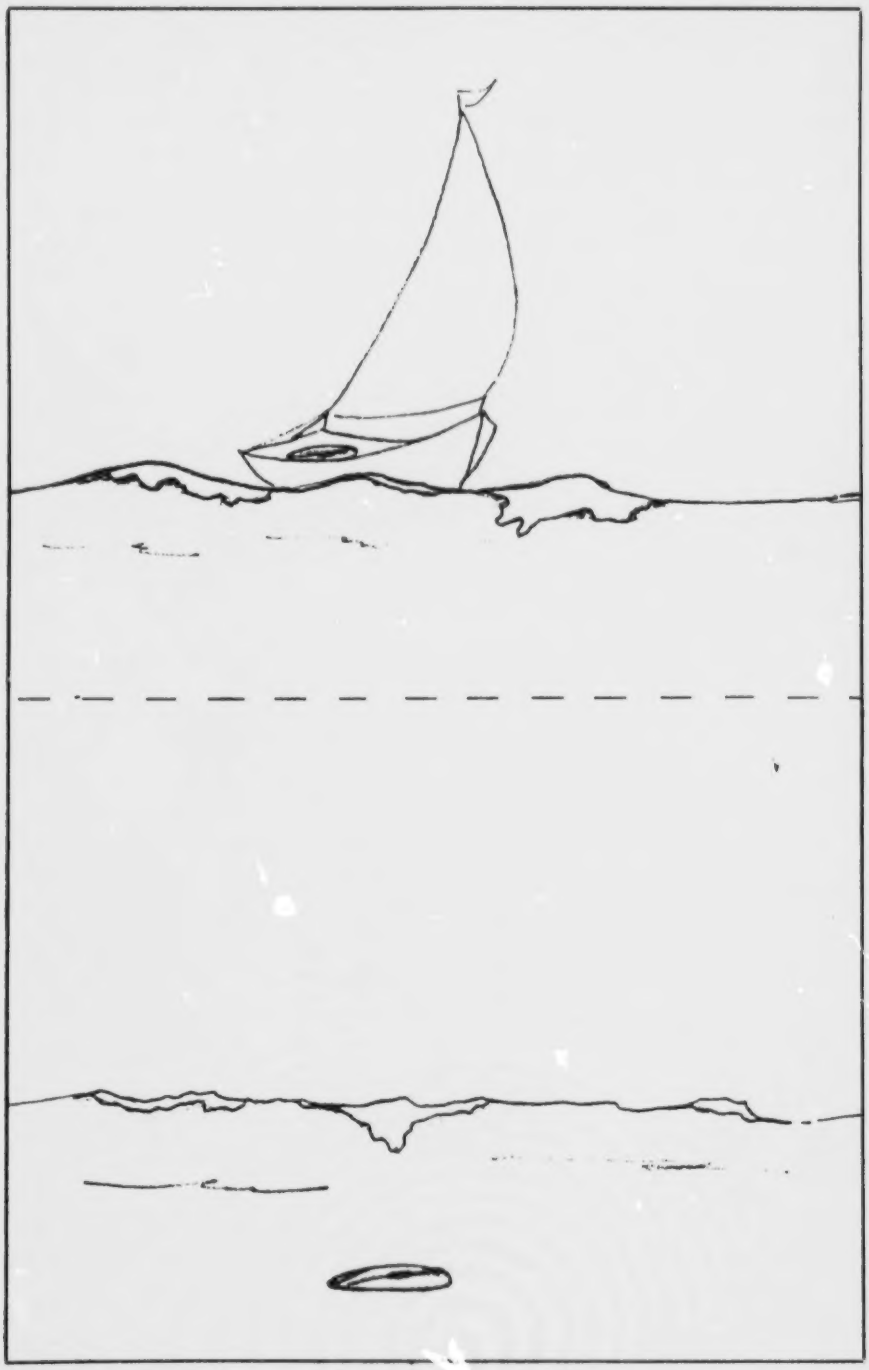
Gather seeds of varying size and shape on your walks through the neighborhood or to a park.

When you get home, sort the seeds by size into small, medium, and large bowls or plates.

Using a cake pan filled 1/2 full with water, let your child drop one seed at a time in the water to find out if it sinks or floats.

If it floats, put it on the paper provided which shows a sailboat floating.

If it sinks, place it on the other paper. Talk with your child about the meaning of the words float and sink. If it stays on top of the water it floats. If it stays on top of the water it floats. If it goes under it sinks.



Fall Frolic

The leaves fall slowly to the ground

(use fingers to show fallen leaves to ground)

In piles so big and bright

(pack piles with hands)

I like to hear the crunchy sound

(hand to ear)

When I jump with all my might

(jump high in pretend pile of leaves)

—by Judy Brown

It's fun to act out poems. Jumping and getting both feet off the ground can be difficult for some children. It requires good balance. Help your child to jump by first demonstrating how to bend the knees. You can then hold his hands and lift him off the ground.

Nature Creature

Gather up a variety of natural materials from a walk to the park or in your backyard, and tell your child he can create a creature. Found materials might include:

- •pine cones of different sizes
- •acorns
- •dried seed pods
- •pine needles
- •small seeds

You might use playdough to stick your creature together or white glue.

It helps if you work with your child and you create your own creature. That way you can talk about texture words, like rough and smooth as you work. Pick a large object to be the body of the creature and ask your child, "What do you think I should use to make his head?" "What are you going to use to make your creature?" "Boy, this pine cone feels really bumpy and rough, but the acorns I'm using for his eyes are smooth."

Creatures don't have to look like anything. After all, they are creatures. They could have one eye or no eyes. It's all up to your child and to you what each of you includes in your CREATURE!!

Note to Parents:

When your creature is finished, to develop creativity brainstorm with your child places your creature could live. What could we call him? Write it all down for your child.

Walking the Line

To help your child develop a better sense of balance lay a long piece of yarn or string in a wiggly curved path. Spread fallen leaves along the string. You and your child can take turns walking the path. When you clap, your child must reach down and pick a leaf without stepping off the path. When he claps, you must do the same.

How many leaves did he collect?

Count them and see.

How many did you collect?

Count About

Let your child count the curved lines on the outside skin of the pumpkin.

How can he figure out where to start and where to stop? (A good problem solving question.)

When you cut inside the pumpkin, beside talking about the feel and smell and taste of raw pumpkin, count the seeds. There may be too many for your child to count. Only have him count as far as he can go. You can count the rest. (Stop at 30)

Round and Round the Pumpkin

Your Halloween pumpkin can be a great learning tool. One of the games you can play with your pumpkin will help you and your child make judgments about measuring around objects.

Using string or yarn, measure around your pumpkin and then cut the yarn to size_____. Cut two other pieces of yarn, one that is twice as long and one that is twice as short. Ask your child which piece of yarn he thinks will fit around his pumpkin. Let him predict and then check his prediction by trying out the yarn.

Try out other round objects and cut a piece of yarn to measure. For example: measure your head, your child's head, an apple, an orange, a small ball. When the yarn pieces are mixed up, can your child match the yarn to the correct object.

Note: To challenge, ask:

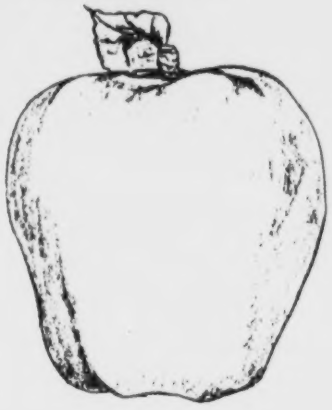
"Is your pumpkin bigger than your head?"

"Than the apple?"

"Is the apple smaller than the ball?"

As Big As An Apple

Using this picture of an apple or a real apple, ask your child about objects found in your home. Are they bigger or smaller than the apple or the same size?



For example:

- Is a chair bigger than an apple?
- Is a pumpkin smaller than an apple?
- Is an orange bigger than an apple? Smaller? The same size?

Who Could Live in a Pumpkin Shell?

To think about who might live in a pumpkin is an activity that can stretch your child's imagination. You can approach this as a size activity and brainstorm birds or animals that would actually fit into a pumpkin, or it could be a totally imaginative lesson. You could pretend the pumpkin is as big as a house.

Ask your child to tell you the story of who lives in their pumpkin. What's his name? What does he do? You print his words and he can draw a picture.

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Listening

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

We use our sense of hearing to learn about the world around us. It tells us about how people are feeling. It helps us learn new information. It tells us when we are in danger. It gives order to our world and helps us to enjoy life.

Good or poor listening habits do not happen accidentally. They are learned from an early age. Parents contribute to the kind of listening habits their child develops.

To teach good listening, you must be a good listener. What your child has to say is important. Show him you are interested in what he has to say. When your child is talking or asking questions, listen attentively rather than interrupting or showing a lack of attention. For your child to be a good listener, it is important for you to have eye contact with your child. This may mean getting on the floor with him or touching him so that he is looking at you while you are talking.

When you ask a question, your child needs time to absorb the question, then time to think through the answer. Experts say to wait eight full seconds. So the next time you ask your child a question—whether in conversation or in a learning game, keep silent for a slow count to eight and listen attentively.

The following activities are designed to help your child become a better listener. Working on hearing differences in sounds is one way of helping your child become aware of what he hears.

Early Education
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Explore and Discover

Match Maker

Fill four lunch bags with different sound makers such as paper clips, buttons, sand, beans, rice, and macaroni. Tape or tie the lunch bag closed. Put a red circle on each bag. Make an identical set of sound makers using four more lunch bags with a blue circle on each bag.

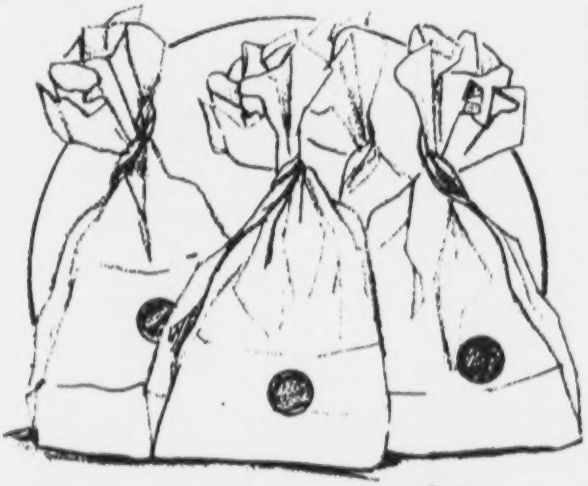
Put all of the red bags on one side of the table and all the blue bags on the other side. Ask your child to pick a red bag to shake and listen carefully to the sound it makes. Now she must try to find a blue bag with the matching sound.

Note: <u>The child should shake only one bag at a time.</u>

When she finds a match, have her put the two bags together. After all the bags have been matched, let your child go back and guess what she thinks made the sound in each bag. Open the bags and discuss what made the sounds.

Sound Walk Outside

After your child has had a chance to explore making sounds, it's now time to let him discover sounds in his environment. Take paper and pencil outside and find a place to sit and listen. Record all the sounds that your child hears. Before going inside, read aloud the list of sounds. Discuss the sounds you and your child liked best.



Sound Walk in the House

Take a discovery walk with your child to listen for sounds around the house. A good place to start is in your child's room. How many sounds can your child make with different objects.

Examples:

–Closing and opening a window
–Turning on a light switch
–Running a toy truck over the floor
–Dropping a pillow on the floor
–Walking, jumping, hopping
–Stamping his feet

It is important that your child be encouraged to come up with his own ideas. Describing the sounds as he makes them is a great way of introducing new vocabulary words such as ringing, squeaky, shrill, clicking, slamming, crashing, rumbling, and thundering.

Loud and soft sounds are easiest for children to discriminate. After your child has had a chance to explore making sounds, you make the sound and let him predict whether the sound will be loud or soft. Ask the child what else could we do that would make a loud or soft sound.

Listen and Understand

Reading stories to your child is one of the most important activities that a parent can do.

1. Reading stories can instill a love of books in a child.
2. Listening to stories strengthens a child's listening skills and memory skills which he will need later.
3. Reading helps a child build meaning for words and thoughts.
4. Reading to a child is a way of helping him realize that words are symbols for spoken language.

How To Read

The first time a child hears a story it should be read for enjoyment. Read the story through without interruption. As you read a story the second or third time, point out details in pictures and encourage your child to talk about them. "How do you think Goldilocks felt when the bears came home? Look at her face in this picture. Can you count the bowls of porridge on the bears' table? What do you like about the pictures on this page?" Remember children enjoy hearing the same story over and over again.

Apply and Express

After you have read the story many times, encourage your child to tell the story to you. If possible, act out the story. Do the things that the characters in the story do, by imitating their voices and their actions.

Between the ages of 3 and 5, children begin to enjoy simple songs and fingerplays. Mother Goose rhymes and fingerplays are excellent for developing memory skills and the rhythm and pattern of language.

Here are some fingerplays and nursery rhymes your child may enjoy:

Nursery Rhymes

Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses
And all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty
Together again.

Jack and Jill

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down
And broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Little Miss Muffet

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet
Eating her curds and whey
Along came a spider
That sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Fingerplays

Five Buzzin' Bees

Here is the bee hive
(Cup one hand)
Where are the bees?
They're hiding away
Where nobody sees
They're coming out now
(Other hand represents bees buzzing out of hive)
They're all alive
Here's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Buzz-z-z-z.

I Have A Cat

I have a cat
(Fingers beside nose to resemble whiskers)
My cat is fat
I have a cat
(Arms rounded in front)
My cat wears a hat
(Hands on head)
I have a cat
My cat caught a bat
(Hands crossed in front to form wings; wiggle fingers)
I have a cat
Meow, meow.
(Hands to cheek)

Apply and Express

Move to a Sound

Begin by choosing a sound for which your child must listen.

Examples:

–Pennies dropping in a can
–Spoon banging on a pot
–Finger snapping or a bell ringing

As you make the sound, ask your child to listen and count with you. Make sure you begin with a low number such as two. Your child must move that many times. Children can move in various ways such as:

–Jumping
–Hopping on one foot
–Clapping
–Bouncing a ball

Continue changing the number of times to move or the action. Reverse roles and let your child make the sound and tell *you* how to move.

Note to Parents

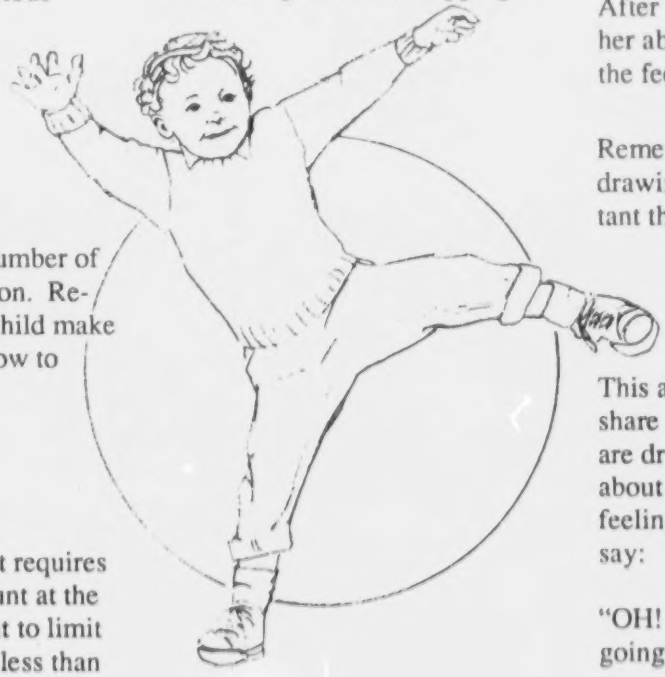
This is a difficult skill. It requires children to move and count at the same time. It's important to limit the number of actions to less than five.

Secret Code

Clap a pattern and tell your child to join in when she knows the pattern. Make sure you continue the same pattern until your child is able to join in.

Clap, clap, stamp, clap, clap, stamp (Repeat)
Snap, clap, clap, snap, clap, clap (Repeat)
Jump, jump, clap, jump, jump, clap (Repeat)

Ask your child, "Can you think of a different pattern for clapping?"



Draw to Music

Give your child some crayons or some paint and paper. Play a familiar tape or a record. Let her listen to the music and draw a picture showing how the music makes her feel. Children need encouragement to express their ideas on paper. Use statements such as:

–I like the color you're using.
–I like the way that line goes around and around.
–Those wavy lines remind me of water.

After she draws her picture, talk to her about the picture she made and the feelings she had.

Remember: The experience of drawing to music is more important than the finished picture.

Note to Parent:

This activity works best if you share it with your child. As you are drawing your picture, talk about what you are doing and feeling. For example, you might say:

"OH! This music is fast. I'm going to make big curvy lines."

"This music makes me feel sad. I'm going to draw a big, fat, black line."

Listening & Memory

Home Activities

Dear Parents,

Good listening skills need to be encouraged! They help build the listening and memory skills needed to follow directions in school and life. A child's ability to listen and remember affects his ability to learn.

The following tips are designed to help you sharpen your child's listening skills:

- Be sure you have your child's attention before you start. Say his name or gently touch him on the shoulder or arm, then have him look at you as you talk.
- Give instructions just once rather than repeating yourself several times. This trains him to tune in the first time!
- Use a quiet, normal voice when getting your child's attention or when talking to him. This requires closer listening than a loud voice.
- Give short, concise, clearly stated directions. "Brush your teeth, then go to bed," rather than long explanations that encourage him to tune you out.
- Listen to your child. Make a habit of talking to him about what he's done at some earlier time.

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Early Education

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Explore and Discover

Experimenting With Sound

This activity is designed to help children listen carefully to sound. Obtain two identical glass tumblers and fill one of them 2/3 full of water and the other 1/3 full. Let your child hit the rim of each glass with a pencil. Ask, "Do they make the same kind of sound?" No.

Give your child a pitcher of water and see if he can get both glasses to sound the same by adding water or pouring some out. Let your child experiment with the glasses and water until he discovers that adding or taking away water changes the sound.

Parent Note:

The more water, the higher the sound; the less water, the lower the sound. Vary the experiment by adding more glasses with different water levels.

Use Your Voice

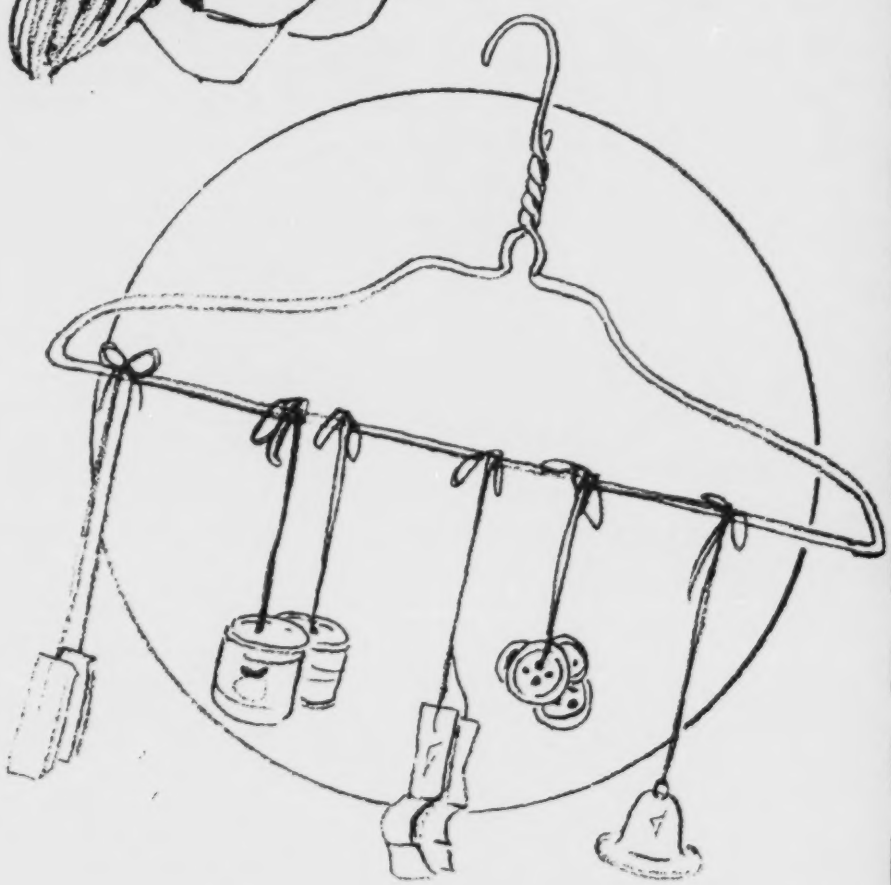
Let your child experiment with his own voice. Can he make a high squeaky sound or a low gruff sound? Say a familiar fingerplay such as:

Thumbs go up, up, up
Thumbs go down, down, down
Thumbs go out
Thumbs go in
Thumbs go round, round, round

(First using a high squeaky voice and then a low gruff voice.)

Noise Chime

You and your child can make a "noise chime" out of pieces of wood, bells, buttons, tin cans, sheets of aluminum foil or other household materials. Suspend the objects from a coat hanger like a wind chime. Hang it in the breeze for all to hear.



Listen and Understand

Simon Says:

Tell your child that the two of you are going to play a listening and remembering game. You will tell him what Simon (you) wants him to do. Give the directions clearly and do not repeat them. (Unless absolutely necessary!)

Begin with two directions. Say—

- Simon Says: Clap your hands and hop two times.
- Simon Says: Walk around the chair and then sit down.
- Simon Says: Gallop down the hall and then snap your fingers.

When your child is able to do two directions, try giving him three directions. Say—

- Simon Says: Stand up, jump over my shoe and then sit down.
- Simon Says: Walk backwards around the chair, sit down and then clap your hands.

Trade places and let your child be Simon and give the directions for you to follow.

Challenger

Ask your child to pretend to be a spaceship. The spaceship is programmed to move forward on hearing a musical instrument played once, stop when it is played twice and turn around when it is played three times. This game needs to be played in a large area such as the back yard or basement. Remind your child to just walk in place if he is in danger of colliding with someone or something. Take turns with your child being the programmer and playing the musical instrument and you being the spaceship.

Little Green Riding Hood

Occasionally say a wrong word as you read your child a story he is familiar with. Tell your child to clap when you say the wrong word. Can he give the correct word? For example: "Little GREEN Riding Hood was on her way to see her AUNT, when a big, brown ALLIGATOR, etc." At first, emphasize the wrong word to help him hear it—then use a normal tone.

Musical Building

Using one of the musical instruments, play it two times. Ask your child to take that many blocks to build with. (If you play two times, your child should take two blocks.) Continue having your child add on the appropriate number of blocks as you play the number on the instrument.

You can vary this activity by changing roles; let your child play the instrument and you build with the blocks.

Parent Note:

Listening, counting and remembering the number is difficult for a child to do. Begin with a low number such as two and, varying the sequence of numbers, build up to five (2, 4, 3, 1, 5).

Apply and Express

Homemade Band

Make a variety of homemade instruments that your child can use to play along with his favorite record.

- Use a Kleenex box and stretch rubberbands around it to make a guitar.
- Make a tom-tom by using an empty oatmeal box or an empty coffee can. Children make the sound by beating on the lid.
- Put popcorn seeds or beans inside an empty Pringles can to make a shaker. An unusual shaker can be made by blowing up a balloon and partially filling it with paperclips, seeds, rubberbands or small gravel.
- Experiment to find out what other household items can be made into musical instruments.

To make this activity more challenging, tape the sounds made by your child's instruments when she is not present. Later, play back the tape to see if your child can recognize which instrument made the sound she's hearing.

Note: Before playing the tape, ask your child to play each instrument one at a time and listen carefully to the sound it makes.

The Shopping List

Plan a special trip to the grocery store with your child. Ask your child to make a grocery list using pretend writing. Begin by giving your child two items to write on his list. At the store let your child read his list and put those items in the grocery cart. You can make this activity more difficult by increasing the number of items to remember on his list.

Pretend writing is a way of letting your child express his thoughts on paper. It can be made up of scribbles or random letters. The important concept is that your child is learning the connection between language and writing.

Moving To Music

Give your child a scarf or a handkerchief. Put on a favorite record. Show him how to move with the scarf to the music.

Explore moving many different ways. Let him pretend to be a robot. How would a robot move his arms, his legs, his body and head to the music?

Other possibilities include:

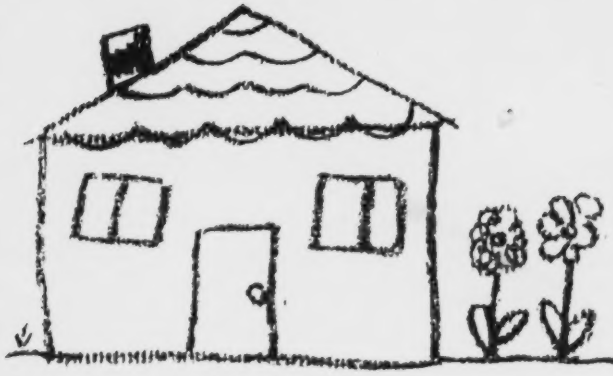
- Moving like an airplane or a car
- Moving like a bear or a rabbit

Bagging The Groceries

Upon returning home from the grocery store, place 6 or 7 items on the kitchen table. Give your child an empty grocery bag to fill. Begin by stating two items your child is to put in his bag in the same order in which you say them. Example: If you say crackers and corn, your child must first put in the crackers and then the corn. Remember the directions must be given first before the items are put in the bag. Empty the bag and repeat by gradually increasing the number of grocery items for your child to remember.

Parent Note:

Each child progresses at a different rate. Some children will be able to remember only three items, while others are able to remember 5 or 6. If your child is having trouble remembering three items, don't move on to four.



Smell

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

The smell of new shoes, falling rain, baking bread, and burning wood enriches a child's world.

The ability to receive information through the sense of smell is another way to help us learn.

If you've ever had a stuffed up nose, you know how hard it is to enjoy the taste of food. A wonderful, warm gingerbread cookie would lose much of its appeal if you couldn't smell it as you ate it.

As children grow, they learn that everything has its own distinctive smell. New shoes smell different from old ones; a wet sweater from a dry one. They learn that each season has its own smell; from the burning smell of autumn leaves to the sweet smell of freshly cut grass and summer flowers.

A sense of smell can alert us to danger. It might be the smell of escaping gas left turned on or smoke from a smoldering fire.

The following activities are designed to explore the wonderful sense of smell.

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Explore and Discover

Nose in a Mirror

First, have your child take a close look at his nose in a mirror. Talk about its shape and purpose.

- Look at the nose's shape, feel the bone under the skin.
- Count the nostrils that help him breathe, talk and smell. Have him hold his nose and breathe, talk, try to smell.
- Notice the little hairs in the nostrils? These filter or keep out the dust in the air so it won't get into the throat.
- When he breathes cold air in the winter, his nose warms the air so it won't hurt his lungs. (That's why you should keep your mouth closed when walking in the cold!) Have him breathe through his nose onto the mirror. The warm "nose-air" creates steam on the mirror!

A Smelling Game

Prepare two sets of four different smells.

Use small containers with lids (so the smells don't mingle). Be sure the smells are very different: ammonia, perfume, orange, vanilla (or other scents such as: soap, shoe polish, apple, sawdust, vapor rub, disinfectants). Blindfold the child and let him guess by smelling what the items are.

Acquaint him with the terms used to describe smells. Smell each one again.

- Is the smell strong? Or weak? Compare a strong smell (ammonia) and a mild scent (apple).
- Does it smell good, pleasant? Or bad, unpleasant? Have him group the pleasant together and the unpleasant smells together.

Then with eyes closed or blindfolded, have him pair the scents. Ask, "Can you put the orange smells together?" etc.

What's Cooking?

As you prepare a meal, call your child's attention to the odors which come from the kitchen. This may include the smell of burning food. Ask her to tell you what she thinks is cooking.

Smelly Walk

Take your child on a smelly walk around the neighborhood or nearby park. As you're walking, encourage your child to be alert to the different smells and odors. Can she identify any of the smells? Does she like the way it smells?

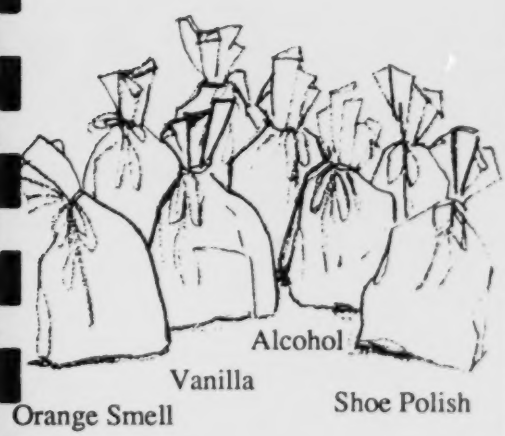
Listen and Understand

Smelly Bags

To play this game you will need:

- 8 paper lunch bags with a hole cut in the side
- 8 cotton balls on which to place the smells
- 4 items that smell different from each other; for example, vanilla, soap, alcohol, perfume, shoe polish
- 4 pieces of red yarn to tie top of bags
- 4 pieces of another color yarn for other bags (see below)

Place one smell on a cotton ball in each of four bags. Then tie the tops with red yarn.



Do the same for the other four bags but tie them with a different color yarn. Let your child help with preparing this game, so he is familiar with the smells.

Match the Smelly Bags

To play, he must match the smells. First let him sniff through the hole in a bag tied with red yarn. He must then find the same smell by sniffing a bag tied with blue yarn.

Acquaint him with the terms used to describe smells. Smell each one again.

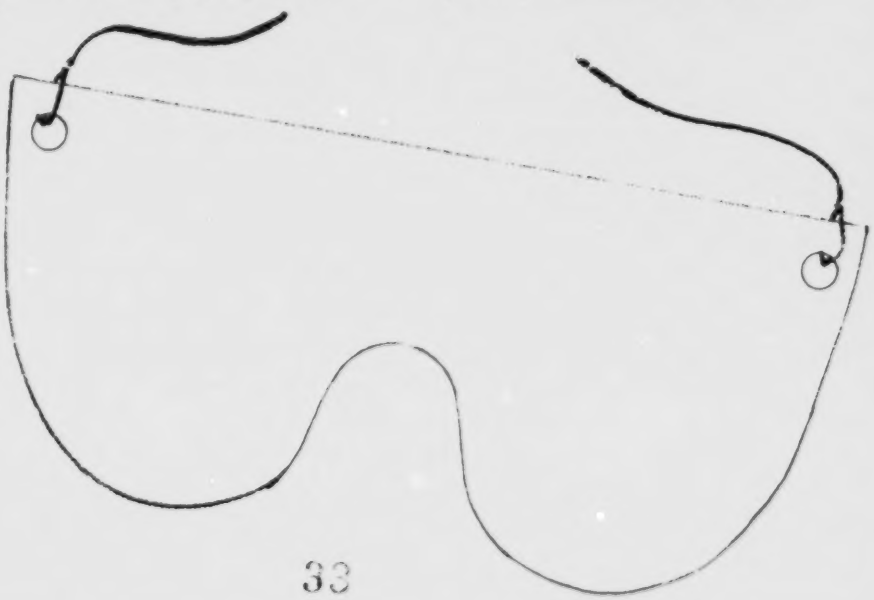
Is the smell strong? Or weak? Compare a strong smell (alcohol) and a mild scent (vanilla).

Does it smell good, pleasant? Or bad, unpleasant? Have him group the pleasant together and the unpleasant smells together.

Smelly Mask

Cut out the pattern and trace around it on a paper plate. Cut the mask from the plate and use elastic attached to the sides so that your child can slip it on. If you don't have any elastic, use string.

Your child can decorate it using crayons or markers. This mask can be used for many of the taste and smell games.



The Warning Game

To acquaint your child with odors that might be trouble, allow him to smell objects that may have been burned (toast, match, marshmallows). Have similar unburned objects available for him to use as comparison. Ask him to smell them carefully.

Mix burned and unburned objects, cover his eyes and ask him to smell one object at a time and tell you whether it has been burned.

Apply and Express

The Nose Knows

Demonstrate how your child's nose helps him identify liquids.

Fill three baby food jars with three clear liquids, such as water, vinegar and alcohol. Close the lids, then ask your child to tell you which jar contains the water. It will be impossible!

Then have him uncap the jars and tell—by smelling—which is water, vinegar or alcohol.

Smelly Snail

On the snail provided, create a creature using smelly items from around the house. Paste smelly items on another piece of paper to give it body. Squeeze a trail of white glue on the snail's shell. Your child can select different objects to place on the glue. For example:

popped popcorn
cloves
cinnamon
soap shavings
red hot candies
celery flakes
old bits of orange peel
old bits of lemon peel

Use whatever you have in your kitchen that has a scent.

Talk to your child about the way things smell as he glues them on his snail.

Smelly Snail

Smelly's shell is shaped like a spiral. Ask your child to think of something that's a spiral.

Parent's Note: Spiral is a new word. Look for spirals in your house, such as: screw, noodles, sea shells.

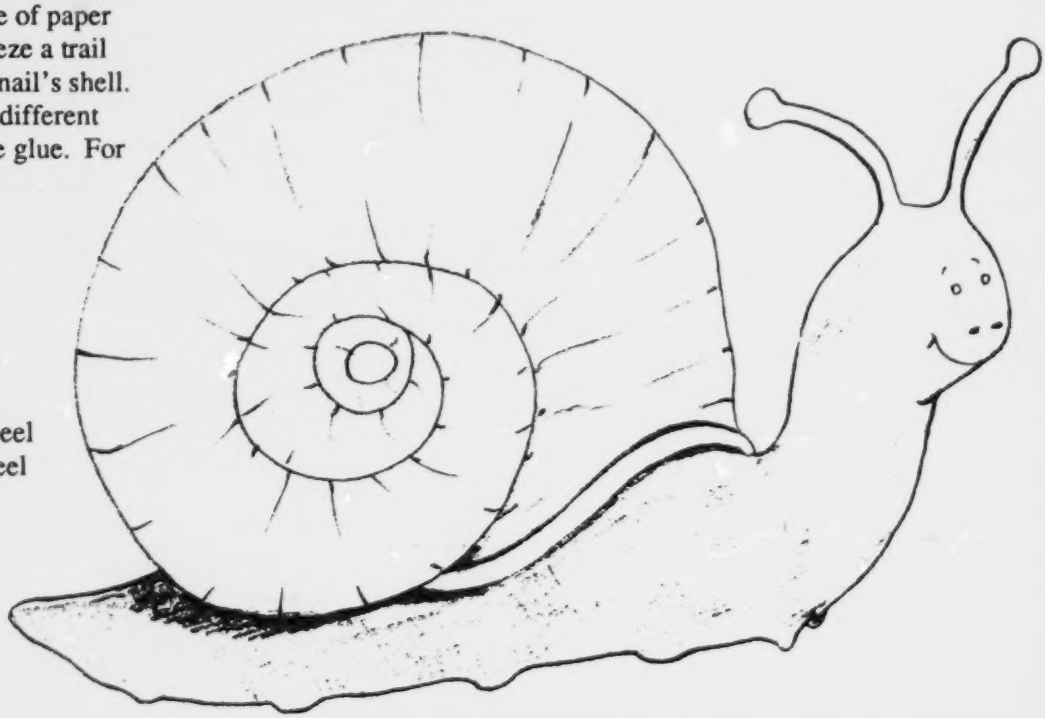
Glue objects on shell.

Be a Bloodhound

Tell your child that there is a breed of dog that finds people and things by sniffing and smell. Tell him you're going to play the blood-hound game. Hide scented cotton balls under furniture or tucked in furniture. Can your child crawl like a bloodhound and locate the smells?

Parent's Note: Choose dry smells to scent the cotton balls so they don't stain furniture and carpets, such as:

baby powder
perfume powder
garlic powder
cinnamon
powdered spice, like cloves



Taste

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

The sense of taste is the first sense that children develop. When children are babies, they use their mouth to explore and learn about their world. As they get older, they rely on putting objects in their mouth to get information about them. Eventually, they begin tasting things that are appropriate. Children learn the vocabulary of how things taste and feel (sweet, salty, sour, bitter, crunchy, chewy, soft), so they can better understand and describe their world.

As children begin making their own food choices, it's necessary to stress that good eating habits generate good health. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Show your child it is important to eat breakfast by eating with him.

You do not need to have cereal or eggs for breakfast. A peanut butter sandwich, toasted cheese sandwich, fruits or soup are nourishing and can be eaten for breakfast. Candy, cake, potato chips and donuts should be discouraged.

Here are some food facts that will help you provide nutritious eating and tasting for your child:

Each day offer a child-size serving from each food group. (We all expect young children to eat too much. Too large a serving can appear overwhelming or can be the beginning of an overeating problem.)

To make eating more fun and nutritious:

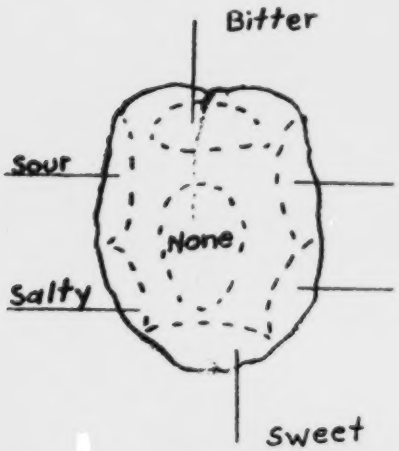
- Serve eye-catching food, with bright colors like orange carrots, red tomatoes, mild flavors, raw veggies, smooth soups and puddings (all appeal to the young child).
- Introduce new foods and new tastes one at a time. Offer familiar foods with new foods. Expect your child to like the food and ask that only a tiny taste be taken.
- Be casual about new foods. Avoid forcing food or making a fuss. (Remember how you dislike having food forced on you.)
- Children need to eat food of various textures to help develop their palate and muscles used for speech. Encourage your child to eat crunchy foods that will require more chewing and effort.
- Respect your child's appetite. A child's rate of growth, activity level, and state of health all influence *how much* is eaten.
- Be careful about offering food as a reward for good behavior. This could result in overeating or poor eating habits.

Explore and Discover

Children need to explore and discover their mouth and tongue and the food they eat.

Your Tongue And Taste

We taste different things with different parts of our tongue. Have your child look at his tongue in a mirror. Tell him to touch the front tip of the tongue. That part tells you if your food tastes sweet. Touch the front sides. This part tastes salty food. The back sides taste sour food; and the very back center tastes bitter food.



Now have him stick his tongue out and rub gently to feel the taste buds (bumps). The taste buds tell you how the food tastes and if you like it or not.

Your Nose Knows

Get an apple and a potato. Cut a few small pieces of each. Put them in a paper bag.

Have your child close his eyes, reach in and take a piece.

Now have him hold his nose tightly and eat the piece. Is it an apple or a potato? Can you tell? You cannot tell! Can you taste it? You cannot taste it! Can you smell it? You cannot smell it!

Then have your child smell a piece of apple while he eats a slice of potato. Was his mouth surprised? Encourage your child to talk about what he is experiencing and discovering.

A Tasting Party

Have a tasting party—tasting sweet, sour and salty foods. Prepare a tray with tiny bites of foods that are sweet, sour and salty:

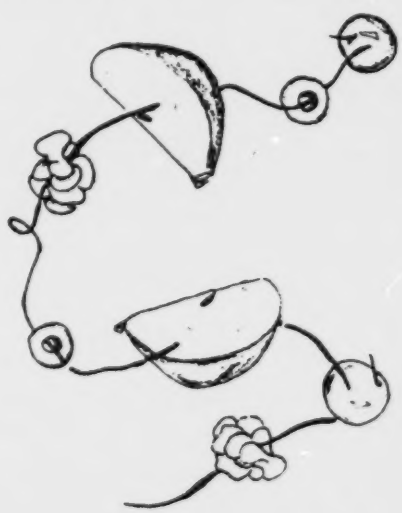
Sweet:	cookies, M & M's, red or gold delicious apples, finger Jello
Salty:	potato chips, crackers, peanuts, pretzels, popcorn
Sour:	lemon, lime, pickles, grapefruit

Let your child choose an item from the plate, taste it and talk about whether it is sweet, sour or salty. Continue with the rest of the food items. Remind him that his tongue is telling him how it tastes. Talk about your favorite taste.

Patterning With Food

There are patterns all around us, in nature, in math, in words we read. It's helpful for children to have an understanding of pattern, and it's fun to do it with food and tasting. Begin with two kinds of food cut in bite-sized pieces; example: carrot, celery; grapes, oranges; Fruit Loops, Cheerios; cheese crackers. Start a pattern and ask your child to place one kind of food, then another on a plate—carrot, celery, carrot, celery, etc. Then he can eat them up as he says the pattern. Later, you can make the pattern harder. Tell your child carrot, carrot, celery, carrot, carrot, celery. Can he continue the pattern?

You could make a pattern to string outside for the squirrels: cranberry, cranberry, apple; popcorn, popcorn, Cheerios. This is a good activity to do in the winter.



Milk Group →

Milk Group

Everyday should consist of three child-size servings with meals. This could be three, three-quarter cups of milk, ice cream, cheese, or pudding made with milk.

Meat Group →

Meat Group

Everyday should consist of two child-size servings. A child-size portion of hamburger is 3 inches wide and a half-inch thick. Nuts, beans, and peanut butter are also part of this group.

Fruit & Vegetable Group →

Fruit and Vegetable Group

Everyday should consist of four child-size servings. This could be one-half of an apple or orange, 2 tablespoons of canned vegetables such as peas, or one-half of a tomato.

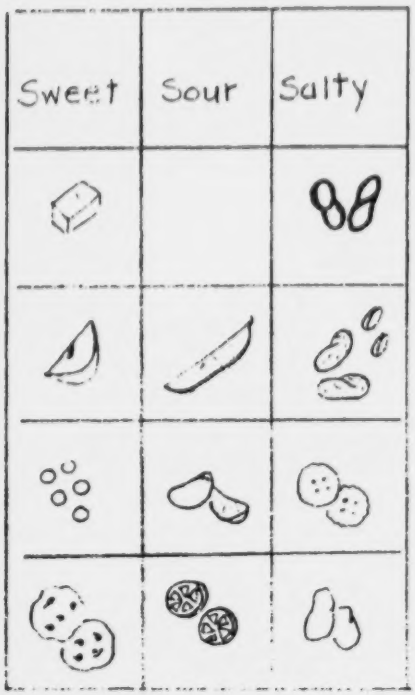
Grain Group →

Grain Group

Everyday should consist of four child-size servings. This could be one-half cup of dry cereal or noodles.

Listen and Understand

After your tasting party, help your child graph sweet, sour and salty foods. Take each food item that has been tasted and place it on the paper graph that you've made ahead of time. Let him count and see how many foods are sweet, sour or salty. Which has more? Which has less? Are any two the same?



Note To Parents: The above games can be made easier by using two taste categories (such as sweet and sour) instead of three.

Ants On A Log

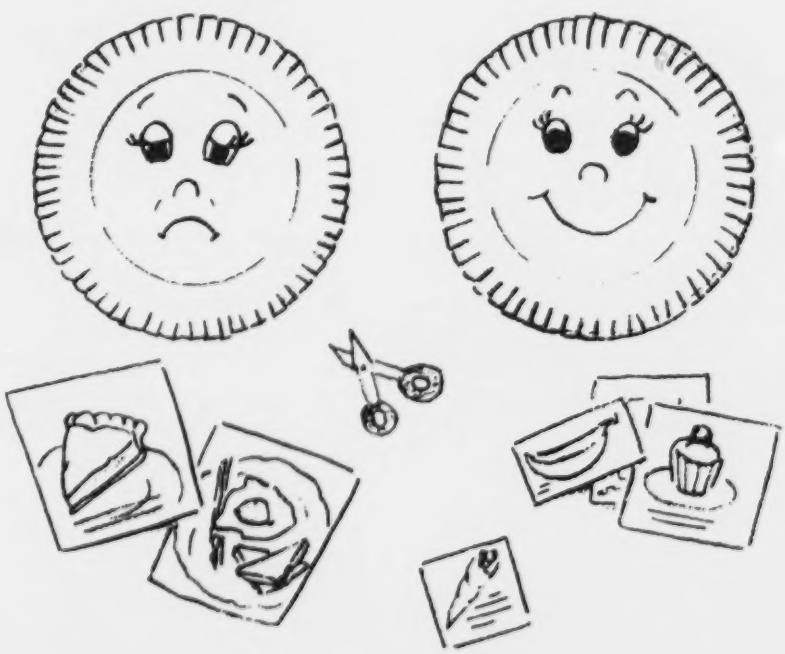
Here is a simple recipe that you and your child can do together. Talk about good healthy food with your child and then tell her that she is going to make a "good food" snack. This snack is called "Ants On A Log." You will need:

- celery
- peanut butter
- raisins
- butter knife

Tell your child to wash one stalk of celery and then cut it carefully into three or four pieces. Let her spread the peanut butter inside the celery with the butter knife and then put raisins on the top. Each of you eat a section and talk about how it tastes—sweet, sour, or salty. When you are finished, ask your child to tell you the steps in making "Ants On A Log" or show you by making another one all by herself. This will help her memory and sequencing skills.

Healthy Cut-Ups

Look through magazines and food ads and discuss with your child fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats. Using two paper plates, draw a happy face on one and a frowning face on the other. The happy face plate is for healthy foods and the frowning plate for unhealthy foods. Let your child place a food picture on the correct plate.



Apply and Express

Menus For Story Characters

Read a familiar book to your child like, "Bread and Jam for Frances," "Curious George," "Little Red Riding Hood," "The 3 Little Pigs," "Clifford the Big Red Dog," etc. Have your child make up menus for the characters in the story. What do you think they would like to eat? Why? What could be their favorite food?

My Favorite Dinner

To give your child some decision-making skills, let her plan a meal for the family. Discuss with your child the importance of choosing healthy and well-balanced foods. Using pictures you cut out of a magazine or paper, let her choose the foods she wants for the meal. As your child tells you her food choices, write them on a piece of paper. Read the menu back to your child. Allow your child to help you prepare this "delightful meal."

Gumdrop Game

Show your child several different flavors of gumdrops. Let him put a blindfold or a handkerchief over his eyes. Give him a gumdrop and see if he can guess the color or flavor of the candy by taste alone. (If your child does not want a blindfold, have him close his eyes.)

On a hot summer day, play this game with a popsicle. Tell your child to close his eyes and take a lick of the popsicle. What flavor is it? Can he tell by taste alone?

Bowl Of Bubbles

Read the poem below:

If I had a bowl of bubbles so bright
I'd gobble them up and eat them at night
I'd pass them around and swallow them down
They'd quiver and pop, and then I would stop.

Jan Dial and Judy Brown

Can you think of other non-edible things it might be fun to eat. If you could eat diamonds, how would they taste? A cloud? A flower? A feather? A slice of sponge? A chunk of the moon? Answering these make-believe questions helps your child develop creativity.

Crunchy Creatures

Create a creature using fruits or vegetables. Choose one fruit as a base and stick eyes, nose, mouth, hair, etc. into it with toothpicks.

What to use:

For Base	*For Decorations*
pear	grapes
peach	cherries
apple	nuts
banana	celery chunks
cucumber	carrot slices
orange	cheese chunks
lemon	marshmallows
plum	cloves
potato	lettuce

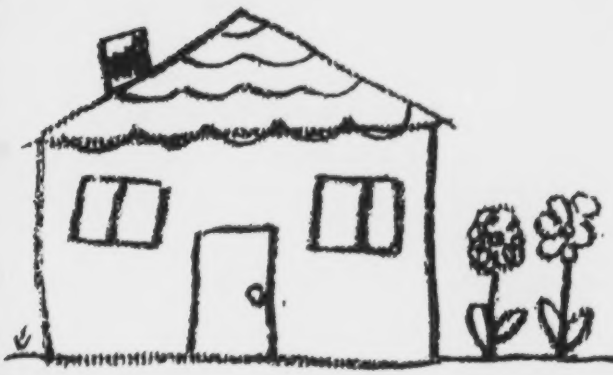
toothpicks

Give your creature a name and talk about how he tastes as you eat him. "I'm eating his crunchy ears!" "I'm eating his sweet nose!"

Orange You Moving

Put an orange on the floor. See if your child can think of a way to move the orange across the floor without using his hands. Then have him think of another way to move it. How many different ways can he think of to move the orange?

This helps develop creativity and problem-solving.



Touch

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

Children learn about the world around them through their senses. The sense of touch is an important way for your child to discover how things feel. As children touch things, they need to understand the words to describe how things feel. Words that describe whether objects are hard, soft, rough, smooth, sticky, bumpy, wet, dry, hot, cold, etc., enable a child to understand the world around him more completely.

The sense of touch is important in learning. If a child is having difficulty identifying a numeral or shape, having him touch the edge of a plastic numeral or shape enhances his ability to remember its name. For some children, the tactile (touch) experience is the best way for them to learn. So it's important for you to be aware of the need to provide experiences to add to the development of your child's sense of touch.

The ability to feel and sense textures enriches and enhances our lives. Skin is a sense organ that covers the whole body. A child feels things not only with his hands, feet and face, but everywhere on his body. Your child senses comfort when he hugs a soft stuffed animal or touches the silky border of his special blanket. It's imperative to know when objects are hot or cold for reasons of safety. He senses danger when an object is too hot or too cold.

Exploring the nature of textures will be an interesting and exciting experience for both you and your child.

Explore and Discover

Children enjoy exploring and discovering the things around them and how they feel.

Touch and Guess

Take a feather and rub it on different parts of your child's body. Can he tell you the name of the body part you touched? Use other objects found around the house, such as a paint brush, sponge, silk scarf, wool scarf, cotton ball, etc. Let him close his eyes and then repeat the game. Can he name the body part without looking? Some children are very sensitive to textures and being touched. Gently touching them with various objects may help them become less sensitive.

Use shaving cream in the bathtub and squirt it on different parts of the body. See if your child can name the body parts. (Be careful not to squirt on your child's face.) Soap crayons can be used in the bathtub. Draw a circle on a body part or let your child draw a mark and name the body part. This is fun and will wash off in water.

Recipe for soap crayons:

Put one-fourth cup of water into a measuring cup. Fill the rest of the cup with Ivory Snow flakes. Mix and add food coloring. Press into an old ice cube tray and allow to dry for a day or two. Let your child use these soap cube crayons in the bathtub. This will wash off easily and will not be very messy.

Feely Walk

Take a walk around your house with your child and find things that feel soft. If you can squeeze it, it is soft. Talk about hard objects and how they feel. If you can't squeeze it, it is hard. Continue walking through the house and feeling objects. You and your child can discuss these objects and describe if they feel hard or soft.

Note: Take a walk and feel things that are rough or bumpy and smooth on another day. The concept hard and soft, rough and smooth, are confusing for children. They will call something smooth when it is soft, and hard when it is rough. They need a lot of experience feeling objects and talking with you about how it feels. If they are confused, stick with one word for awhile.

Feel and Draw

Fingerpainting is a fun way to allow children to feel a variety of substances. Here's the recipe for fun:

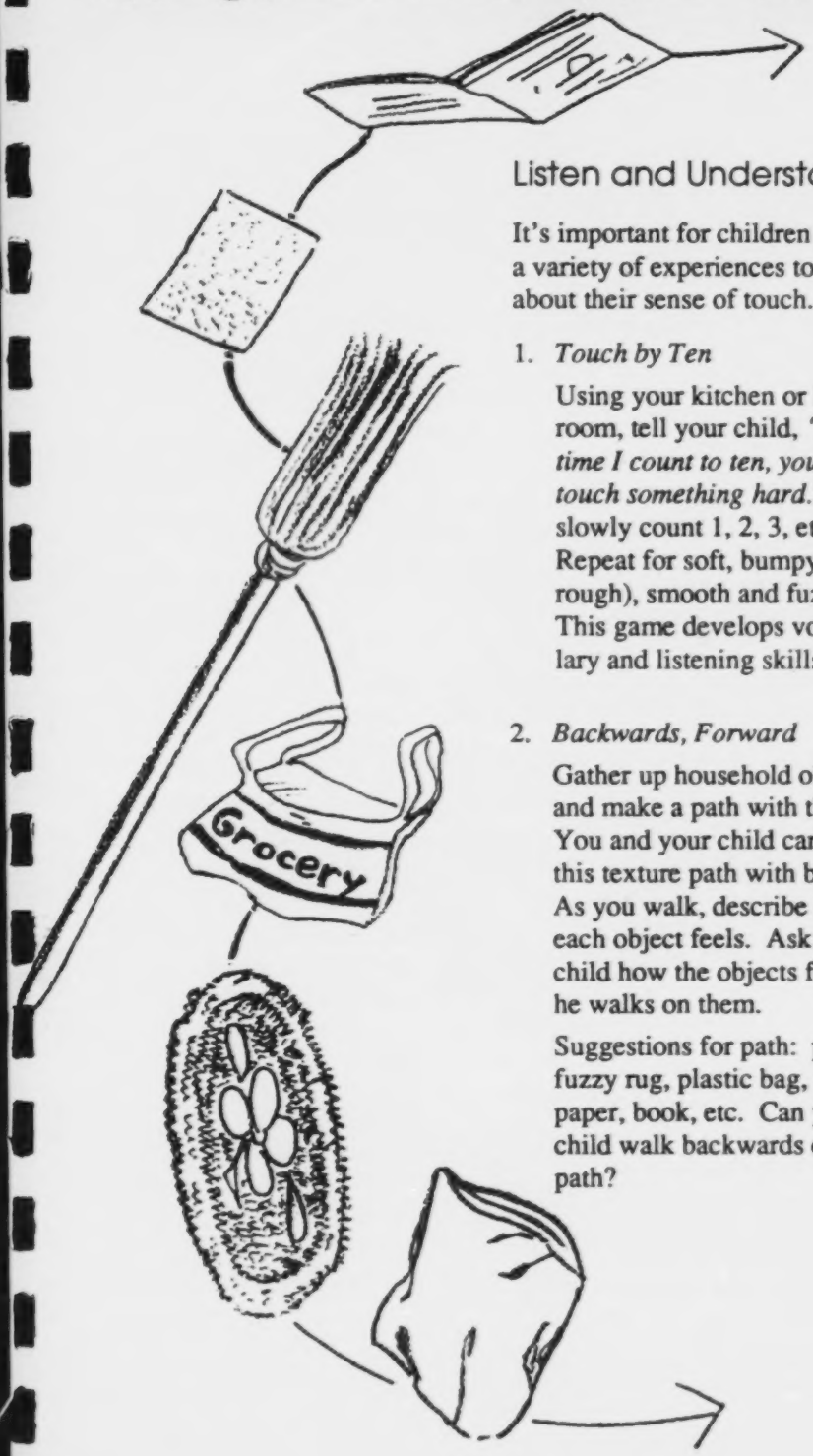
1 Wash hands
2 Make instant pudding
3 Fingerpaint on the kitchen table or a tray with the pudding

As he fingerpaints, let him experiment making different lines. How many different kinds of lines can your child make? How many different marks can he make with his finger or hand? You can use your fingernails, one finger, several fingers, side of your hand, fist, etc. How does the pudding feel? Then comes the fun part—he can lick his fingers as he paints. Other items that can be used for fingerpainting are liquid laundry starch and food coloring, shaving cream with or without food coloring, flour and water mixture, fingerpaint, corn starch, Ivory Snow, sand, and salt. You can use things that feel soft or hard, rough or smooth.

Creepy Crawly

Take your child outside to look for worms, pill bugs, or other insects or bugs. Dig a hole or turn over a rock. What did you find? Pick it up and feel it. How does it feel? Is it slimy, wet, dry, hard, or soft? Feel the rock, the dirt, the grass, etc. How does it feel?

Listen and Understand



Listen and Understand

It's important for children to have a variety of experiences to learn about their sense of touch.

1. *Touch by Ten*

   Using your kitchen or living room, tell your child, *"By the time I count to ten, you must touch something hard."* Then slowly count 1, 2, 3, etc. Repeat for soft, bumpy (or rough), smooth and fuzzy. This game develops vocabulary and listening skills.

2. *Backwards, Forward*

   Gather up household objects and make a path with them. You and your child can walk this texture path with bare feet. As you walk, describe how each object feels. Ask your child how the objects feel as he walks on them.

   Suggestions for path: pillows, fuzzy rug, plastic bag, sand paper, book, etc. Can your child walk backwards on the path?

Find It Feely Box

To make the feely box, slide the bottom of a small margarine tub into the bottom of an old sock. Place a bunch of household objects from your junk drawer inside the sock. By using his sense of touch alone, can your child feel the objects and find something round, something hard, something soft, etc.?

To make this activity more challenging, as you feel each object, classify it as hard or soft. Place the objects in two rows to make a graph. Which objects do you have the most of—hard or soft?

SOFT	HARD

Note: On another day collect rough and smooth items for a feely box. Choose objects that feel very different from each other.

Apply and Express

Children can use knowledge about touch to solve problems.

Feely Roll

This activity will encourage your child to experience a variety of textures as well as help in the development of balance.

Practice rolling like a log on various surfaces. Pretend your child is an icicle. Tell him to lie down with arms at his sides, then freeze him! Can he turn over and over by keep-ing his body stiff? Seek out differ-ent surfaces to roll on: grass, car-et, a tile floor, a blanket.

As he rolls, ask him to tell you how the surface feels. Is it hard, soft, bumpy, rough, smooth, etc.?

Body Bowl

Using the same rolling motion, introduce your child to body bowling. Set up stuffed animals or plastic milk cartons in a triangle. Tell your child to roll over and over like a log and knock them down. How did it feel? Did it feel the same when he knocked down the stuffed animals as when he knocked down the milk cartons?

Let's Pretend

Pretending develops imagination which we all use to solve everyday problems as well as to enrich our lives.

Share with your child the joy of pretending. Ask how it would feel to be as:

- soft as a marshmallow
- how would a slimy worm move?
- how would a hard steel robot move?
- pretend to be a fish in the water. Ask your child to tell you a story about how the fish feels. What happened to the fish? What's his name?

Your child may show more easily in a physical way that he can tell you. If so, you can put into words what he shows you with his body. For example, "A slimy worm would slide across the floor quickly."

Can your child make up a story about:

- a slimy worm in the ground
- a bird in the sky
- a fuzzy mouse in his house

Write down the story your child dictates and read it back to your child.

Note to Parents: Provide pencils and paper to your child so he can write his own story with "pretend writing." Research tells us that pretend writers evolve into better writers as they enter school. Your child's marks may look like scribble or mock letters (almost letter-like in appearance). You should encourage his/her attempts at writing. Have your child tell you what he wrote about.

Draw a Line

Colored chalk can be messy but fun for young children. The tactile effect of chalk is pleasing to a child and it is easy to apply on a textured surface such as sandpaper. Let him feel the sandpaper and the rough surface. Then your child can "take the line for a walk" all over the sandpaper until the whole area is filled. When he is finished, he may like to experiment with wet chalk using a variety of colored chalk dipped in water to make colored patterns on sandpaper. Crayons can also be used in place of colored chalk.

Feely Collage

As you and your child take a feely walk, collect some items inside and outside the house that your child could paste on a large piece of paper (or a grocery bag cut open makes a large brown piece of paper). Squeeze and rub each item and talk about how it feels as he pastes it on the paper. Is it hard, soft, rough, or smooth?

Vision

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

Children learn new information by watching others. A baby learns to smile by watching adults. Small children learn by imitating what they see other people doing. Most of the information we know as adults was learned through careful observation of our environment. One of the primary ways your child will learn in school is by using his sense of sight. The activities in this guide are designed to help children make careful observations and to put those observations into words. The skills covered in this guide include:

Patterning

A pattern is a combination of words, movement or designs arranged in a certain order. Patterns are predictable and, by helping children understand the repetition of patterns found in numbers and words, we're giving them a valuable tool in understanding how math works and in unlocking the secret of the printed word.

Visual Discrimination

Children often are overwhelmed by too many details in their environment. The ability to pick out what's important, to see parts of a whole picture and to know when letters or words look the same or different is visual discrimination.

Visual Memory

The ability to remember what you see is an important skill in helping children learn to read, write and spell.

Estimating

Estimating is a skill we use throughout life. Whether it's a trip to the grocery store, balancing the checkbook or cooking, we're estimating numbers, quantity and volume. Estimating is simply an educated guess built on a lot of experiences in counting and measuring. Children need experiences in estimating to enable them to come up with reasonable solutions to problems. Try some of the estimating activities in this guide yourself and see how well you do at making an educated guess.

Experience tells us that a lot of hands-on activities are necessary in developing the ability to estimate.

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Explore and Discover

Fading Shapes

Exploring with shapes and color can help children recognize different shapes. Use circles, squares and rectangles cut from one color of paper and taped onto a large sheet of dark construction paper. Tape this large paper onto the window, design side out. After two weeks, remove the paper from the window and take the paper shapes off. What happened to the color of the paper? Talk about the shapes that they can see.

Peek-a-Boo

Make a peek-a-boo picture by cutting strips out of construction paper. First, fold a large piece of paper in half. Cut 1" strips on 1/2 of the paper up to the fold. Choose a large picture containing one item such as a balloon, dog, snowman, horse, girl, etc. Place the picture, face toward the strips, between the paper. Lift one strip and see if your child can guess what the picture is. If he cannot, continue lifting one strip at a time until more of the picture is revealed and he is able to identify the picture. After the picture has been identified, lift all the strips revealing the whole picture so that your child can see if he is correct. This game helps visual discrimination. Books that reveal parts of a picture also help visual discrimination.

Crystal Garden

Creating a crystal garden will help your child make observations about how things change.

Materials:

1 Tablespoon each of salt, water, liquid bluing (can be found in the laundry aisle at the grocery store)

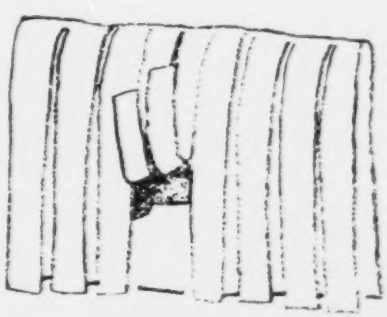
1 Teaspoon ammonia

Charcoal

Food coloring and container (like an aluminum pie plate)

Procedure

Place charcoal on the bottom of the aluminum pie plate. Combine water, salt, bluing and ammonia, stirring well. Then pour solution over the charcoal. Drop a small amount of food coloring in various places on the charcoal after the solution is added. Heating the charcoal makes the crystal grow faster. As your garden grows, observe the growth and the color of the crystals and experience the wonder of what they see.



Junk Box

Make a junk box of colored noodles to explore and later use for patterning. Use three different types of noodles. Dye each group a different color. Let them dry and mix them together. Divide into three groups. You and your child can play with them, looking at and talking about their color and shape. Explore making different designs and shapes. Can you make a noodle creation? Use a small box for storing the noodles and save to use on another day for Patterning (directions under Listen and Understand).

Recipe for dying noodles:

Materials:

uncooked noodles
glass jar
food coloring
alcohol
newspaper

Mix 1 tablespoon of alcohol, a few drops of food coloring and some noodles in a glass jar (half full). Screw the lid on tightly and shake until all the noodles are coated. Let the noodles dry on a piece of newspaper.

Other junk that can be used for junk boxes are nuts, bolts, screws, Lego pieces, buttons, toy cars, or small building blocks.

Wordless Books

Reading books to children which contain no words develops pre-reading and language skills. Pictures give clues about what's happening in the story. It helps him to look carefully at a picture and talk about what he sees. Your child will be able to read these books after you demonstrate to him how to describe the pictures. It's fun to go to the library with your child to check out a book that will help develop your child's visual learning.

Kitchen Fun

Let your child explore and play with a set of blocks from his room, or cans and boxes from the kitchen. Let him build with them and make constructions of his own. Later, cut open a brown paper bag which will provide you with a large piece of paper. Draw around different size cans and boxes (or blocks); then mix up the objects and see if your child can match them to the shape drawn on the paper. Talk to your child about the name of the shape. This way he will not only hear the name of the shape but also see the shape and match it to a drawn form.

"Dr. Livingston, I Presume"

Take your child on a looking adventure—not to deepest, darkest Africa—but to your kitchen. Find things in the kitchen with holes in them and look through them. An old paper towel tube makes a great telescope. Lots of kitchen gadgets have holes that are different and unusual shapes. Compare them. Is it easier to look through a large or a small hole?

Continue your exploration all over the house. Two toilet paper tubes taped together make great binoculars to four-year-olds. They help them find things in the toy box that have holes in them. Magnifying glasses are great for looking and exploring a world of tiny things that may have gone unnoticed before.

Listen and Understand

Food Shapes

Shapes can be learned by using a variety of food. Give your child ○, □, ▭ and crackers. While he eats his crackers talk about and name the shape. Finger Jello is a great way to learn shapes. After making it, cut it in different forms. Let your child help make the finger Jello and you can name the different shapes as you cut them. Here is a recipe for finger Jello:

2 envelopes Knox gelatin
1 - 6 oz. box Jello
2-1/2 cups water

Dissolve Knox gelatin in 1 cup cold water. Heat 1 cup water to boil and add Jello. Bring back to boil, then remove from heat. Add Knox gelatin mixture to hot Jello mixture and stir. Then add 1/2 cup cold water. Be sure to grease the pan before pouring (Pam works great).

When your child is eating lunch, you can cut his sandwich in the shape of squares, circles, or rectangles and name these shapes for him.

Rolling out cookies is another way to make and name shapes. Let your child help you make and roll out cookie dough. You can use cookie cutters or a knife and cut the dough into circles, squares, and rectangles naming these shapes as you make them. You can put colored sugar sprinkles on the cookie shapes. Say, "Let's put red sprinkles on the circles;" "Let's put green sprinkles on the square cookies," etc. Here is a recipe for rolled cookies:

1/2 cup	butter
1/2 cup	shortening
3/4 cup	sugar
2	eggs
1/2 tsp.	vanilla
1/2 tsp.	baking soda
3 Tbls.	sour cream
1/2 tsp.	salt
3 cups	flour

Bake 375° for 7 minutes.

In a big bowl, mix butter, shortening, and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla and mix. In small cup, mix baking soda and sour cream. In medium bowl, mix flour and salt. Add ingredients from small bowl to big bowl and mix. Stir ingredients from medium bowl into big bowl. Form into ball and refrigerate at least 15 minutes. Roll out dough on floured surface. Use cookie cutters or knife to form cookies. Add sprinkles. Bake.

Kitchen Fun

a. Using the cans and boxes described in Explore and Discover, decide with your child which are big and which are little. Make a graph using a brown paper bag cut and lying flat on the floor. Divide the paper down the middle by drawing a line with a crayon and put all the big cans and boxes on one half and the little cans and boxes on the other half. Discuss which set has more and which has less. Next, turn the paper over and divide the paper into three sections—○, □, ▭. Naming the shape of the box or can, place it in the correct section on the graph. When you have finished sorting the objects, discuss again which side has more or less items.

Object: Graphing; more and less; naming shapes.

b. *Guess What:*

Using the same cans and boxes, pick 4 items and put them on the kitchen table. Describe one of them by telling your child the color, size (big or little), shape, and what it is used for. See if he can guess which item you are describing. Repeat describing another item. After your child has guessed several times, change and let him do the describing and you guess.

Object: Describing objects.

Patterning

Patterning is found in numbers and words. Practicing patterning helps your child understand how math works and how words are formed.

a. *Clap and Slap*

Sit on the floor with your child. Let him watch you make a pattern of movement such as clap, clap, snap; slap legs, clap, snap. Stand and stamp, stamp, clap; jump, jump, walk, walk, etc. Make up any movement pattern using 3 or 4 motions. Then see if your child can copy the same pattern. After he copies several of your patterns, let him make up a pattern and you copy his movement.

b. *Noodle Patterns*

Now you can make patterns using the noodles in your junk box. Begin by making a pattern of 3 objects and ask your child to repeat the pattern. A pattern can either be by color, shape, or size. Repeat this activity using a variety of patterns.

c. *Word Pattern Books*

Read books to your child that have word patterns such as:

The Gingerbread Boy
The Little Red Hen
Brown Bear, Brown Bear
Nursery Rhymes
The Three Billy Goats Gruff

Look for books that have words or sentences that repeat themselves throughout the story or that rhyme. These word pattern books will help children develop reading skills that they will need later in school.

Count and Guess

Get a small jar (big enough for 10-15 objects) and have your child count as you put objects in it. See how many objects it takes to fill the jar. Examples of some objects to use are nuts, Starburst candies, gumballs, etc. Repeat this activity several times using a variety of objects. Then put in a jar and ask your child to guess how many things are in the jar without counting. A lot of practice is necessary to become good at estimating. Try it yourself and see! It is difficult.

Object: Estimating helps with problem solving.

Apply and Express

Shape Hunt

Take a flashlight on a shape hunt to find ○s, □s, ▭s. As your child finds a shape, ask him to shine his light on the shape and tell what he found. Example: The clock is a circle. How many ○s, □s, ▭s can your child find? Return to the kitchen and ask your child to draw something he saw that was a circle (example: clock). Repeat with □ and ▭. This activity can be made easier by just looking for one shape at a time.

Another variation of the shape hunt would be to use cut-out shapes and hide them in your living room. As your child finds a shape he shines his light on the shape and names it. Ask your child to draw where he found a ○, □ and ▭.

I Spy

This is a favorite childhood game passed down from one generation to the next. Begin by telling your child "I spy" and then describe by color, size, and shape the object you want your child to guess. Repeat, letting your child describe an object for you to guess. This is a great activity to do in the car, the doctor's office or any time there's a long wait.

Take a Trip

Take a trip with your child to K-Mart, McDonald's, the zoo, grocery store, etc. After you come home, let him draw pictures of some of the things he saw or did. Put on a front cover page with a title and staple the pages together to form a book. Let your child read the picture book to you and his friends.

Magic Bag

1. Collect objects or pictures and place in a bag.
2. Begin by telling children that you have a magic bag filled with wonderful surprizes.
3. Choose an object or card from the bag (without your child seeing what it is) and use movements to act out the card or object. Can your child guess what it is? Switch places and let your child choose something from the magic bag to act out.

Visual Imagery

The ability to picture an object or event in your mind is called visual imagery. This skill helps children form a picture in their minds as they hear a story being read or directions given verbally.

Books With No Words

On your next trip to the library encourage your child to pick a story book with no words. Ask your child to read the story to you. This is a great way for your child to note details and use words that describe.

Encourage your child to make her own story book with no words. Take a special trip or plan a special activity and make a book about your adventure. Encourage children to draw pictures that represent their adventure. This is a story they can read to family and friends.

Build a Shape

Using marshmallows and toothpicks or playdough and pieces of drinking straws, make squares and rectangles. Brainstorm with your child what you could use to make a circle.

Puzzles

Puzzles help children see how parts make a whole. Begin by encouraging your child to describe the whole picture and note details about how the puzzle fits together. After your child has taken the puzzle apart, put it back together by looking for specific parts of the whole picture. Puzzles help children develop visual discrimination skills.

Look and Remember

Take 4, 5, or 6 objects like boxes from the kitchen, toys from the toybox or clothes from the closet. Let your child name the objects in order from left to right to help him remember. Then tell him to close his eyes or turn his back and you can remove one item. He has to look and tell you which object is missing. If he has no difficulty remembering one object, remove two and have him name the two items. Continue with 3, 4, 5 or 6 (all), removing things and letting your child name the missing items in sequence. How many can he remember?

Object: Visual memory—to look at and remember items in sequence.

Continuing A Pattern

Shape Patterns

Using the colored noodles or cut-out shapes, make a simple pattern such as circle, square, circle, square and ask your child to continue the pattern. Patterns can be made by color or shape. Children need to start with a simple pattern to repeat, and as they master the pattern they're ready to tackle more complex patterns such as: red, red, green; circle, circle, square, square; red, green, blue; circle, circle, square, rectangle.

As children continue a pattern, they must remember the pattern, stay on task and visualize it in their mind. This is a difficult skill for children to master.

Word Patterns

After your child has had the opportunity to hear a variety of word patterns read to him, he is ready to repeat the word patterns on his own. Pick a story he is familiar with and encourage your child to say the repetitive parts of the story. For example, in the Gingerbread Story, ask your child to say "run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man" each time those words appear in the story.

Pattern on a Stick

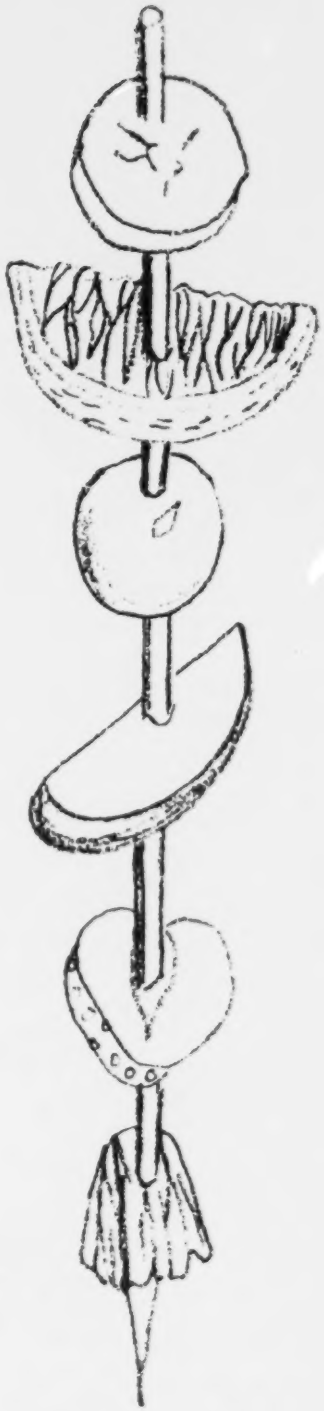
Gather some of the following supplies:

- Fruit slices (such as pineapple, apple, orange or banana)
- Grapes
- Skewer sticks (used for shish-kabobs and found at grocery stores)

Pick two or three food items and stick on skewer. (Example: grape, grape, apple slice or red grape, red grape, green grape.)

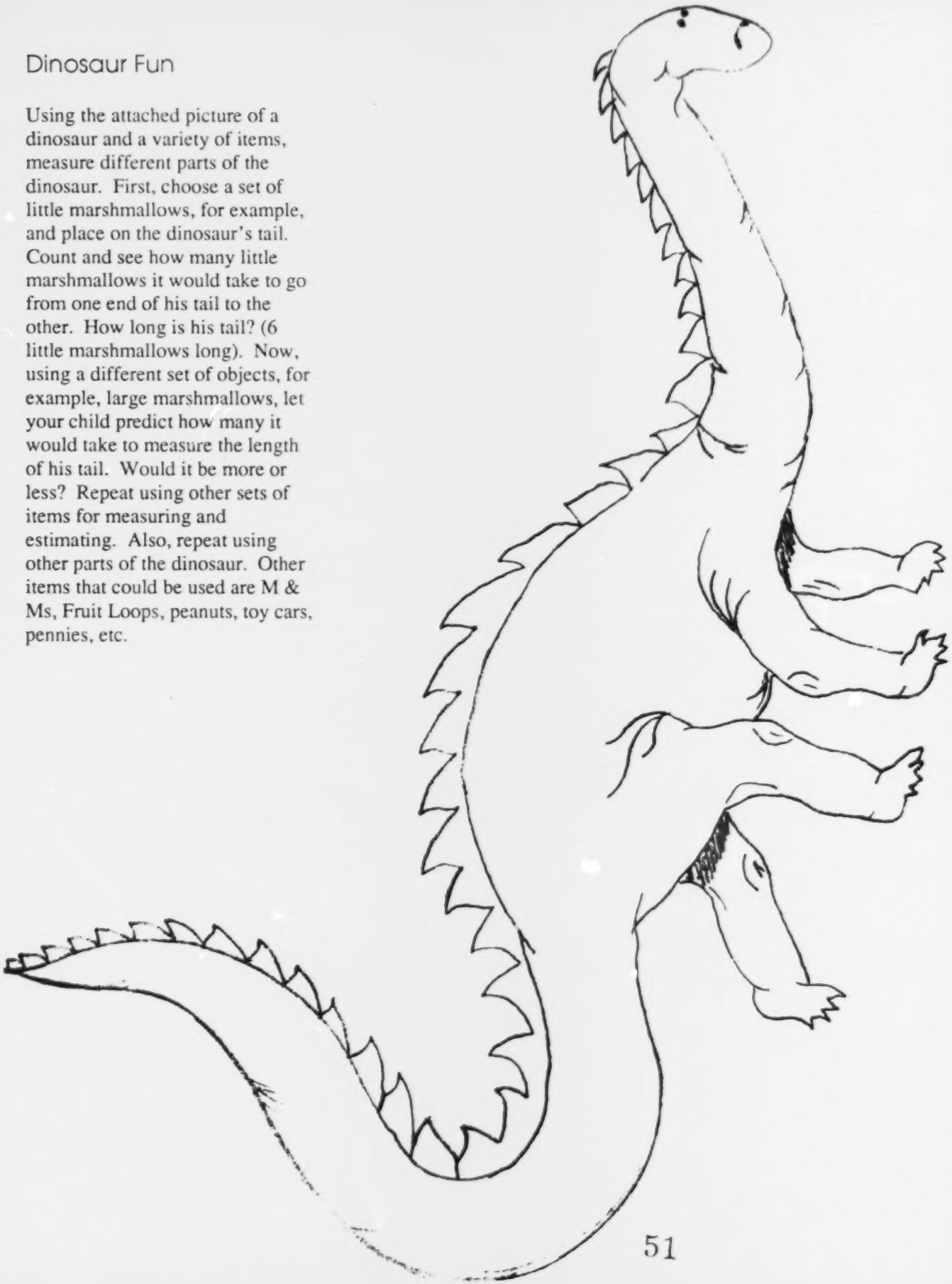
Ask your child to tell you what the pattern is and have him continue the pattern until the skewer is filled. What a great snack or dessert for dinner. Make pattern sticks for the whole family. Encourage children to think of their own pattern and experiment with what could go on their skewer.

Note: If you can't find any skewers, make the food pattern on the table at snack time and enjoy!



Dinosaur Fun

Using the attached picture of a dinosaur and a variety of items, measure different parts of the dinosaur. First, choose a set of little marshmallows, for example, and place on the dinosaur's tail. Count and see how many little marshmallows it would take to go from one end of his tail to the other. How long is his tail? (6 little marshmallows long). Now, using a different set of objects, for example, large marshmallows, let your child predict how many it would take to measure the length of his tail. Would it be more or less? Repeat using other sets of items for measuring and estimating. Also, repeat using other parts of the dinosaur. Other items that could be used are M & Ms, Fruit Loops, peanuts, toy cars, pennies, etc.



Winter

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

Many people think of winter as a grey, uninteresting, stay-at-home time of year. It doesn't need to be; dress up warmly, go out into the yard and continue your child's scientific observation of the outside world.

Help your child observe the winter changes in:

Water—It freezes and forms ice, sleet, icicles and snow.

Plants—Most plants do not grow during winter but look dead. They are dormant.

Animals—We see few birds and animals in winter. Many go to a place where it is warmer or sleep in the winter. We may see cardinals, blue jays, an occasional robin, some rabbits and a squirrel or two.

People—We wear heavier, warmer clothing to protect us from the cold.

After a snowfall your child can use all of his senses to discover the special qualities of winter:

See: Can you see your breath? Collect snowflakes on a black cloth or paper. How many rays of the snowflakes can you count? What do snowflakes look like? Are snowflakes all the same shape? How are they different? How are they the same?

Smell: Does snow have a smell?

Sound: Does snow make a sound as it falls or as we walk on it?

Feel: How does it feel as it falls or when it is on the ground?

Taste: How does it taste? (Use only clean, fresh, new snow!)

After your trip into the winter world, help your child record in written form or discussion what he has seen. Your discussion and/or record will give him new concepts on which to build future learning and increase his vocabulary and language ability.

If it is too cold to go outside, it is a perfect time to pretend winter or snow play.

Crumple a piece of paper into a ball and have a snowball fight.

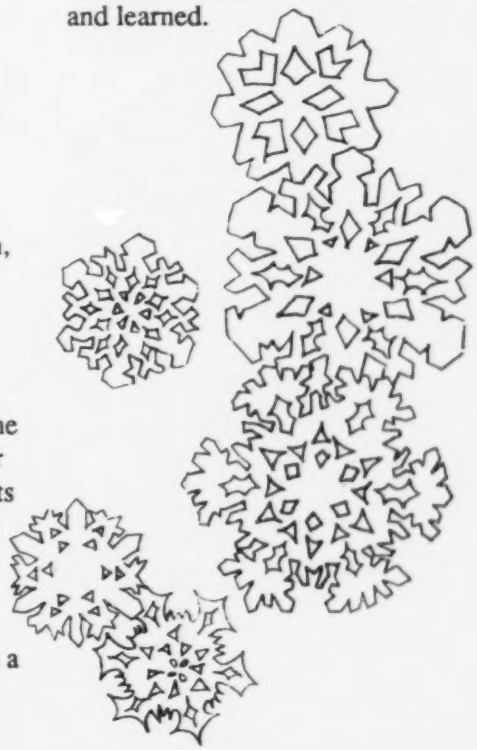
Make an invisible snowman.

Drape a blanket over two chairs and make a snow cave.

Pretend you are shoveling snow or ice skating.

Pretend you are a snowman or an icicle melting.

Dramatic play is an expression of what your child has experienced and learned.



Explore and Discover

The following activities give the children an opportunity to explore and experiment with the winter world and tell what happens when they interact with it in some way:

Indoor Activities

Melt Down:

Bring a cup of snow inside and allow to melt. Set a timer to determine how long it takes. As it melts, help your child observe by asking "What is happening?" "What is it doing?" To make it more challenging, put cups of snow in different parts of the house (example: floor, window sill). Which melts first? Bring two sizes of icicles in the house. Compare to see which melts first. Measure the icicles with a piece of string. What happened?

NOTE: On snowless days these activities can be done with ice cubes.

Mitten Sort:

Gather several pairs of socks or mittens. Have your child match and sort them into pairs.

Indoor Snowmen:

Bring a large container of clean snow inside. Have your child build a three-snowball snowman. (Your child may want to wear mittens.) Decorate with buttons, stones or sticks. See how long it takes the snowman to melt.

Outdoor Activities

Moving:

Snow is for sliding and sledding. Try different things for your child to slide with; a box, piece of cardboard, plastic trash bag or old baby bathtub. Which worked the best?

Freeze:

Put different substances outside and see which ones freeze and which do not. Use such things as water, oil, milk or juice. Make a chart to record your observations. Make popsicles and allow them to freeze outside.

Winter Hunt:

Find tracks and footprints in the snow and guess what made the tracks. Have an icicle hunt and find the longest and shortest icicle. Arrange the icicles by size.

Snow Painting:

Color water with food coloring and put in a spray bottle. Let your child "paint" the snow.

Listen and Understand

Winter Walk

Children can have fun walking and moving in the snow.

Make shapes and patterns with footprints.

Jump, hop or run in the snow.

Make "angels" in the snow (lie on your back in the snow, move arms and legs up and down). Show a picture—not all adults know what an angel in the snow is.

Make snow sculptures using sandbox toys, such as molds, buckets, shovels, etc.

Sequence Snowman

Out of white paper, cut three sets of circles (small, medium and large). Give the three sets of circles to your child and ask him to sort according to size.

Have him put all the large circles out on a table. Tell him to put the medium circles above the large circles. Finally, have him put the small circles above the medium circles. Demonstrate "above" to your child.

Mix up all the circles and see if your child can recreate three snowmen.

Snowman Pancakes

Mix up your favorite recipe for pancakes. Spoon three connecting circles onto a hot griddle or frying pan. At the table, the child can decorate it with raisins for eyes, nose mouth and buttons.

Snowballs

Take five sheets of paper and mark each paper with a numeral one through five with a corresponding set of dots on each page. Have your child glue a cotton ball on each dot. You could hang these papers up in your child's room or you could hook them together to form a book. You could also make a duplicate set of cards, mix them up and then let your child use them for a matching game. (To make this activity more difficult, do not put the dots on the paper.)

Mitten Play

Set out 3 mittens (2 the same, one different). Have child tell you which one doesn't belong. Why? Hide mittens in the house, giving verbal directions to your child to help him locate them. (Example: behind the chair, beside the TV.) Have your child count the mittens he finds. Use numeral cards (1-5) and have child make a set of that number of mittens.

Snow Poems

I built a little snowman.
(Form outline of snowman)

He had a carrot nose.
(Point to nose)

Along came a bunny,
(Move two fingers up and down)

And what do you suppose?

That hungry little bunny
(Rub stomach)

Looking for his lunch,

Ate that little snowman's nose:
(Point to nose)

Nibble, nibble, crunch!
(Open and close hand)

I built a snowman out of three balls, 1, 2, 3
(Hold up three fingers)

One was small, one middle sized, and one as big as can be!
(Form three circles, each larger)

Apply and Express

Pretending and creating art projects are a fun way for your child to show what he has learned about winter and snow.

Let's Pretend

Your child can pretend he is shoveling snow, building a snowman or ice skating indoors (by putting shoe boxes on his feet for ice skates and sliding across the floor).

Play a fast tempo music and let your child dance like a snowflake on a windy day.

Play slow tempo music and let your child pretend to be a softly falling snowflake.

Pantomime Building a Snowman

After a brief discussion of how snowmen are built, pretend to build a snowman by first rolling a snowball until it becomes waist high. Next, roll another smaller snowball to go on top of the first one, and finally a snowball just the right size for a snowman's head. Don't forget the charcoal eyes, carrot nose and apple slice mouth. How about buttons for his coat? A hat and a bright colored scarf to dress him up.

Snowy Pictures

Tell your child to draw a winter picture. Using some of the following materials, tell him to cover the areas where the snow should be: cotton balls, popcorn, grits or rice.

Snow Clay:
Use equal parts of Elmer's School Glue and liquid starch. Place starch in a disposable container. Add glue and mix until it forms a ball. Remove ball and knead until putty-like consistency is reached. (Mixing and kneading takes a considerable amount of time.) Allow time for creative play. Store in plastic bag or covered bowl in a refrigerator.

Play Dough:
Combine in saucepan 1 cup flour, 2 teaspoons cream of tartar, and 1/2 cup salt. Combine 1 cup water, 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, and food coloring. Slowly stir liquid into flour mixture. Cook for three minutes over medium heat until mixture pulls away from sides of pan. Cool slightly. Allow time for creative play. Store at room temperature in covered container.

Note: This is one of the best experiences you can provide for a child. Play dough allows for release of energy and tensions. It allows creativity and is intriguing to children at all levels of development.

Shoveling Snow

You and your child can pretend to shovel snow after a big snow storm.

This is the way we shovel the snow, shovel the snow, shovel the snow.

This is the way we shovel the snow on a cold & frosty morning.

What will we find down under the snow, down under the snow, down under the snow?

What will we find down under the snow as we shovel away this morning?

I found a mitten down under the snow, down under the snow, down under the snow.

I found a mitten down under the snow as I shoveled away this morning.

Your child may suggest other things they might find in the snow.

Transportation

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

In our mobile society, transportation has become more and more important. We are always going somewhere. Transportation means moving people or things from one place to another, using various kinds of vehicles. We talk about transportation in three categories: land travel, water travel or air travel. (If "transportation" is a new word to your child, use it often so he will become familiar with it.)

Turn your daily trips in the car into learning experiences. Talk about the various forms of transportation you see. Discuss the type, color, size and shape of the vehicle. You can work on skills your child needs to develop, such as counting, identifying colors, using position and direction words such as over, under, in front of, behind. Talk about how two vehicles are alike and/or different. (If the child has difficulty understanding the words "alike" and "different," you may use the words "same" and "not the same"). For example, a car and a motorcycle travel on the street and have motors, but the car has four wheels and the motorcycle has two or maybe three wheels.

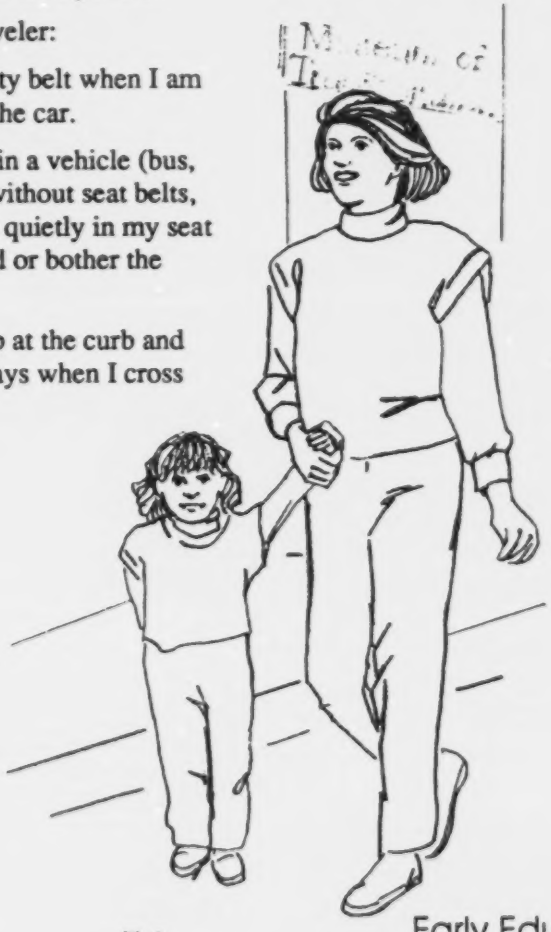
Your community has a wealth of opportunities for your child to see different forms of transportation: the highways, an airport, a train or bus station, or a hobby shop with trains and trucks.

As we travel from place to place, it is important that your child is travel safe. Make a point of reviewing and reemphasizing the following travel safety rules:

I am a safe traveler:

- I wear a safety belt when I am traveling in the car.
- When I ride in a vehicle (bus, train, boat) without seat belts, I know to sit quietly in my seat and not stand or bother the driver.
- I always stop at the curb and look both ways when I cross the street.
- Also, I listen for approaching traffic before I step into the street.
- I know *never to accept rides* or candy from strangers along the way.

You can encourage language development in young children by providing materials which will stimulate role-play.



Explore and Discover

Let's Take A Trip

A row of kitchen chairs can be a bus, train or an airplane. Dolls, animals and "you" can be the passengers.

Traveling Props

Provide your children with some travel props, such as: coats, suitcases, binoculars, old cameras, tickets, purses, old passports, keys, knapsacks, travel brochures, play money.

Driving Around

Toy cars, boats and airplanes stimulate lots of creative play. Add blocks for roads and bridges and boxes for garages or hangars and let your child's imagination dictate the play.

Water, Land or Air?

(Classifying)

Place several models of each type of transportation vehicle in a box or on a tray. Let your child sort the vehicles into groups of water, land or air travel. Label boxes with pictures or make an appropriate garage, hangar, or harbor into which vehicles can be sorted.

How Things Move on Wheels

Have your child experiment moving items. Build a ramp with blocks and let your child experiment rolling differently shaped items down the ramp. Ask the questions: "Which ones roll?" "Why are wheels round?"

The Big Race

(How objects move on water.)

Partially fill a child's wading pool or baby bathtub with water. Stretch string across the pool to create two sailing lanes. Two sailboats are placed in the water and children blow through straws to propel the boats along the course. Discuss what factors contributed to the one boat winning over the other.

Note: Remember *never* leave a child unattended when working or playing around water.

My Own Boat

Provide your child with boat-making equipment (a bar of Ivory soap, styrofoam meat trays, blocks of light wood). Add a mast and paper sail to make boats and have your child predict whether they will sink or float.

Listen and Understand

Show-Me Game

Place pictures of different vehicles in front of your child. Ask him: "Show me what I would ride in to cross a lake." He should point to a picture of a boat. Another question would be, "I'm thinking of something to move furniture from one house to another." He should find a picture of a truck.

I'm Thinking Game

(Identifies object from a description.)

Say to the child: "I'm thinking of a vehicle that carries a lot of children to school. What is it?" (school bus). Take turns with your child and have him ask you questions. This will be difficult but practice will make it easier for your child to describe objects.

Driving Course

(Following directions)

On a large piece of paper or opened-up grocery bag, draw 5 or 6 buildings. Your child may color each one a different color. Have your child stay on the road as he drives a toy car to the places you name. "Drive to the yellow house, then the red house." "Park next to the green house." "Park behind the blue house." "Drive around the red house and park beside the yellow house."

Tell-Me Game

(Identifying how vehicles are alike and different.)

Show your child pictures of three vehicles that are similar in some way (have 4 wheels or can fly, etc.). Say: "Tell me how these are alike." Discuss how they are "different."

Rhyme

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

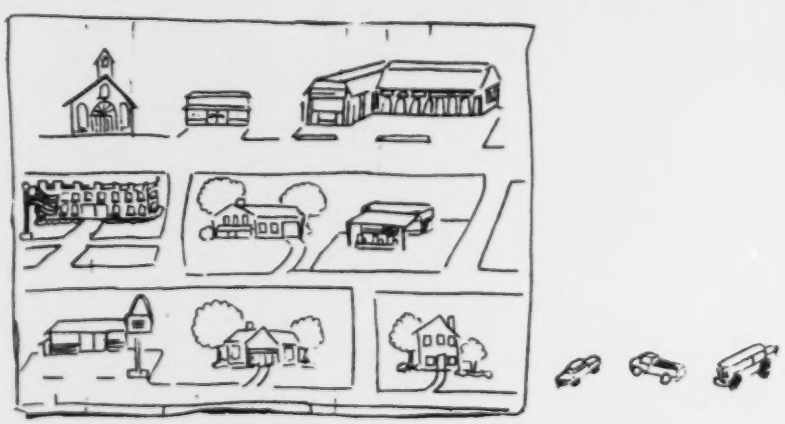
Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream
(Words may be changed to fit any vehicle.)

Song: The Wheels on the Bus

(Traditional tune)

The wheels on the bus go 'round and 'round,
(Rotate hands around each other.)
'Round and 'round, 'round and 'round.
The wheels on the bus go 'round and 'round
All over town.

2. The doors on the bus go open and shut,
   Open and shut, open and shut, etc.
3. The money on the bus goes clink, clink, clink,
   Clink, clink, clink, etc.
4. The driver on the bus says, "Move on back,
   Move on back, Move on back," etc.
5. The baby on the bus cries "Waa, waa, waa,"
   "Waa, waa, waa," etc.
6. The mother on the bus says, "Shh, shh, shh,"
   "Shh, shh, shh," "Shh, shh, shh," etc.
7. The windows on the bus go up and down,
   Up and down, up and down, etc.
8. The wipers on the bus go "Swish, swish, swish,"
   "Swish, swish, swish," "Swish, swish, swish," etc.



Apply and Express

Provide your child with boxes, paper, poster board, crayons and let him create his own transportation vehicle. Ask him what he is going to build, how he is going to build it; then have him carry out his plan.

Transportation Book

(Classification)

Your child can make a picture book about transportation by cutting pictures out of magazines, catalogs or brochures and pasting them on colored construction paper. You can group items of transportation such as vehicles on land, air or water.

A notebook can be made out of a grocery bag. Cut sheets of the same size from several grocery bags, stack them to form a book. Staple pages at the edge to make a large, flat scrapbook.

Creative Thinking

Name a familiar place and ask your child to think of different ways to get to the place.

Example: Ways to get to the sandbox (down the hall and out the back door; through the window and around the house).

You could also play this game by drawing a map and pictures of familiar landmarks to chart a course.

Creative thinking is just another term for creative problem solving. Children need practice in learning to be creative and original in their approach to problem solving.

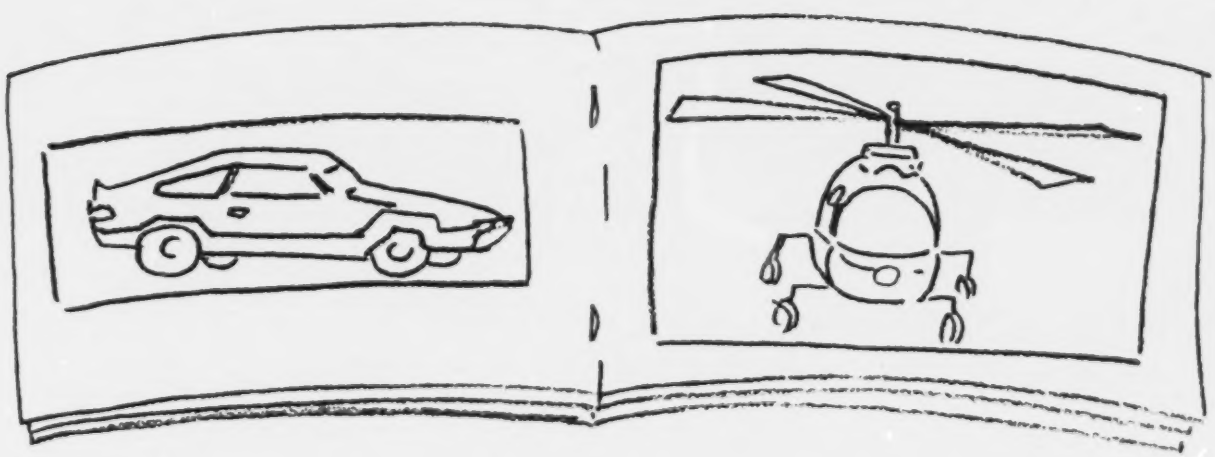
Alike, Different and the Same

Use scale models or sets of picture cards of the various transportation vehicles. Toy catalogs or model catalogs may provide you with the pictures for this game. Have your child find two just alike. As your child gains experience, add one that is different to pairs that are alike and ask your child to "find the one that is different" (for instance, two cars and a bus). Ask: "Why is the bus different?"

Parking Lot

(Patterning)

Line up your child's cars into a certain pattern. (Example: red, red, blue; red, red, blue—or boat, car, car; boat, car, car.) See if your child can continue the pattern.



Building

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

From the beginning of time children have built things. You as a parent did, your mother and father did and even your grandparents. What is it about the act of building that makes it timeless?

Building something must meet a deep need in children to interact with the materials around them and control them in some way that is satisfying.

Just as learning to hold onto a table and take a few halting steps help a baby learn to walk, so, too, building with blocks and other objects helps a young child move from the concrete world of things he can touch and feel to the world of symbols and ideas.

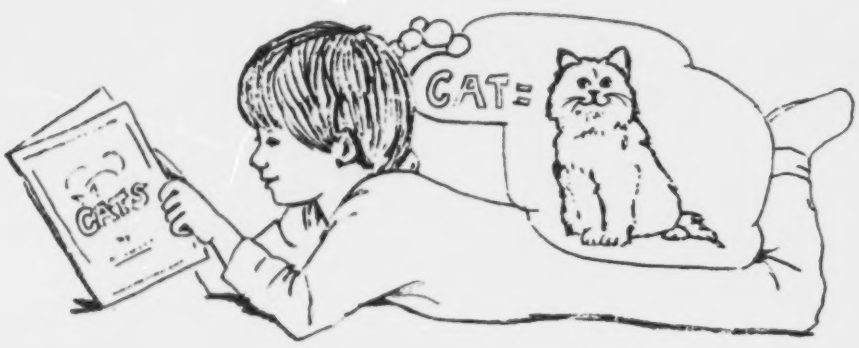
As a child works with building materials and blocks, he uses a block in his play to represent something else. A block can be a building or many blocks a skyscraper. He's learning to use symbols, one thing standing for something else.

Representing ideas and things with symbols is basic to the way we must function as adults. As we learn to read, we begin to understand that the letters and words become symbols that represent real things. For instance, the letters C-A-T represent a real live animal. Planning to build and the act of building enhance a child's mental development from the concrete to the abstract.

It's amazing the vast number of skills a child can learn simply by building with a pile of blocks.

- She must learn to control the tiny muscles in fingers and hands to gently set a small block at the top of a tower. (Sometimes younger children get very frustrated when they do not have this control yet and the tower crashes.)
- She must develop a sense of balance as she stands and adjusts pieces in her building.
- She must visualize and plan her building based on the materials she has.
- She must estimate and make judgments about size and weight. (A giant block on top will collapse the structure. A heavy block on two skinny pillars will fall.)
- If she builds with a friend, she must learn to cooperate and plan with another or the building falls (a direct consequence of their actions).

Helping your child focus on the buildings found around him in his environment is another way to enrich his experience and enhances his ability to build. The uses of buildings, their shape, design and how they are built will open up a new and interesting world for you and your child.



Explore and Discover

Creative Constructions

Give your child many opportunities to build with a variety of materials. Each material presents its own problem to be solved. Provide your child with:

- wood scraps from dad's work room or from a hardware store to glue (wood or white glue) together in construction
- popsicle sticks and stiff plasticine clay to stick the sticks together
- toothpicks and marshmallows (can they make a structure that sticks up?)
- styrofoam and toothpicks stuck into a chunk of styrofoam or a styrofoam cup as a base
- various sizes of boxes and milk cartons make good buildings
- wooden blocks and Legos or bristle blocks—add a prop to the wooden blocks occasionally (like play people or a bag of clothespins) to see how they use them in their construction and play
- blocks from bags can be made easily by stuffing newspapers into a brown grocery bag and then taping the end. When many bags are filled and taped, the building fun can begin.

Cheryl's Cement Recipe

Take a container and fill it 1/3 full of water
Add food coloring or paint
Add 2 tablespoons glue (white Elmer's)
Fill rest of container with Ivory Snow until it has the consistency of paste

Using pieces of styrofoam and the cement, create forms and buildings. Wire and styrofoam chips can be added for detail as children create imaginary buildings, space ships, toys, etc.

Walk Around the Block

(Exploring and reviewing shapes of buildings.)

Pick a sunny day to take a walk through your neighborhood focusing on buildings. Talk about the sizes and shapes of homes, count the windows. Take along a magic looker with a triangular hole cut in the middle and search for triangles as you walk. Can

your child name them? Points at the corners of roofs are good triangles. Talk about what buildings are made of: bricks, wood, stone, cement, glass, metal. Talk about porches and pillars, doors and windows, roofs and garages, steps and driveways, 2-story homes and ranch or 1-story homes.

Sand Castles to Keep

Children love to build castles and other structures in the sand. Here is a recipe for making sand castles that may be saved:

6 cups sand
1 cup wheat paste
water
paper cups, tin cans, plastic food containers, clay flower pots, drinking straws, flags, and other decorations

Follow these steps:

1. Mix wheat paste and sand.
2. Add water until the sand has a clay-like consistency. It should be sticky, and it should pack firmly into shapes. More sand and water may be added as needed. The wetter the sand, the longer it will take to dry.
3. Use any large container as a base for your castle. Pack the sand firmly around the base and add turrets shaped from paper cups or other small containers. Use sticks or plastic utensils to form windows, steps, and other designs.

As you and your child observe the different buildings in your neighborhood and the places you visit, the two of you will be surprised to discover how many textures and patterns can be found on the surfaces of these structures. Wouldn't it be fun to save some of them? Take them home with you so that you can examine them and talk about how they are alike and different.

An easy way to do this is to make a "rubbing." All you need is paper (typing paper, computer paper or even newspaper works fine) and crayons that have the paper peeled off. Show your child how to hold the paper over a surface of the building that is interesting to him with one hand and rub over the surface using the side of the crayon with the other hand. You will need to help hold the paper as he rubs. Experiment with lots of different surfaces as you discover which make good rubbings and which do not.

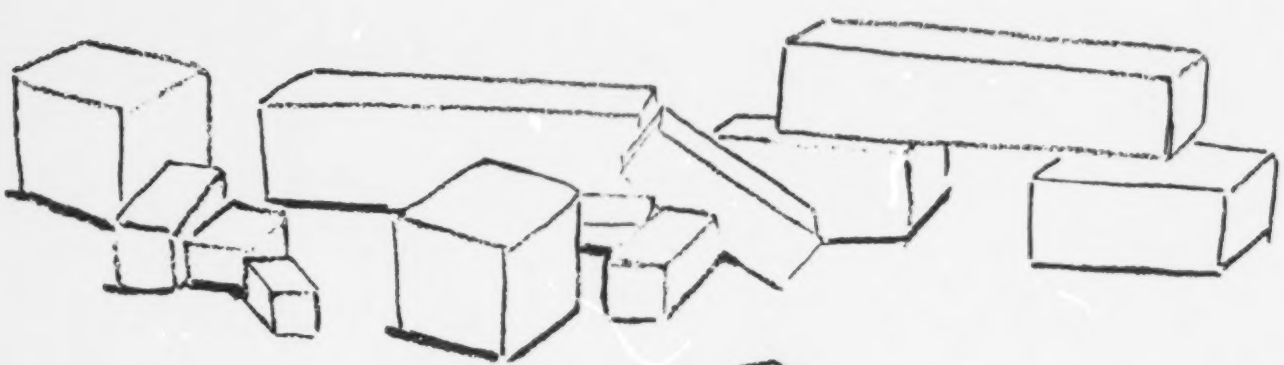
A Building Book

(Classification)

Look through old magazines with your child and find pictures of various kinds of buildings (castles, log cabins, adobe houses, condominiums, etc.). Have him cut out his favorite ones to add to his own "Building Book." This book can be made simply by stapling several pieces of typewriter or construction paper together. Your child may decorate the cover by drawing a picture of his own home. As he finds different kinds of buildings to add to his book, you may ask, "What is this building made of? Why does this building have this kind of roof? How are these two buildings alike? How are they different?" Such questions will help your child see likenesses and differences in the world around him.

Roll and Build

You will need one die (with dots 1-6) and blocks or another building material. When your child rolls the die, he will tell what number he has rolled by counting the dots. He then takes that many blocks and builds a structure with them. Have him do this several times to give him practice. Can he tell how many dots are on the die without counting? As he rolls the same number again, see if he can think of a different way to arrange that number of blocks.



Listen and Understand

Make a Road Map

(Learning position words like in, out, and around representing objects.)

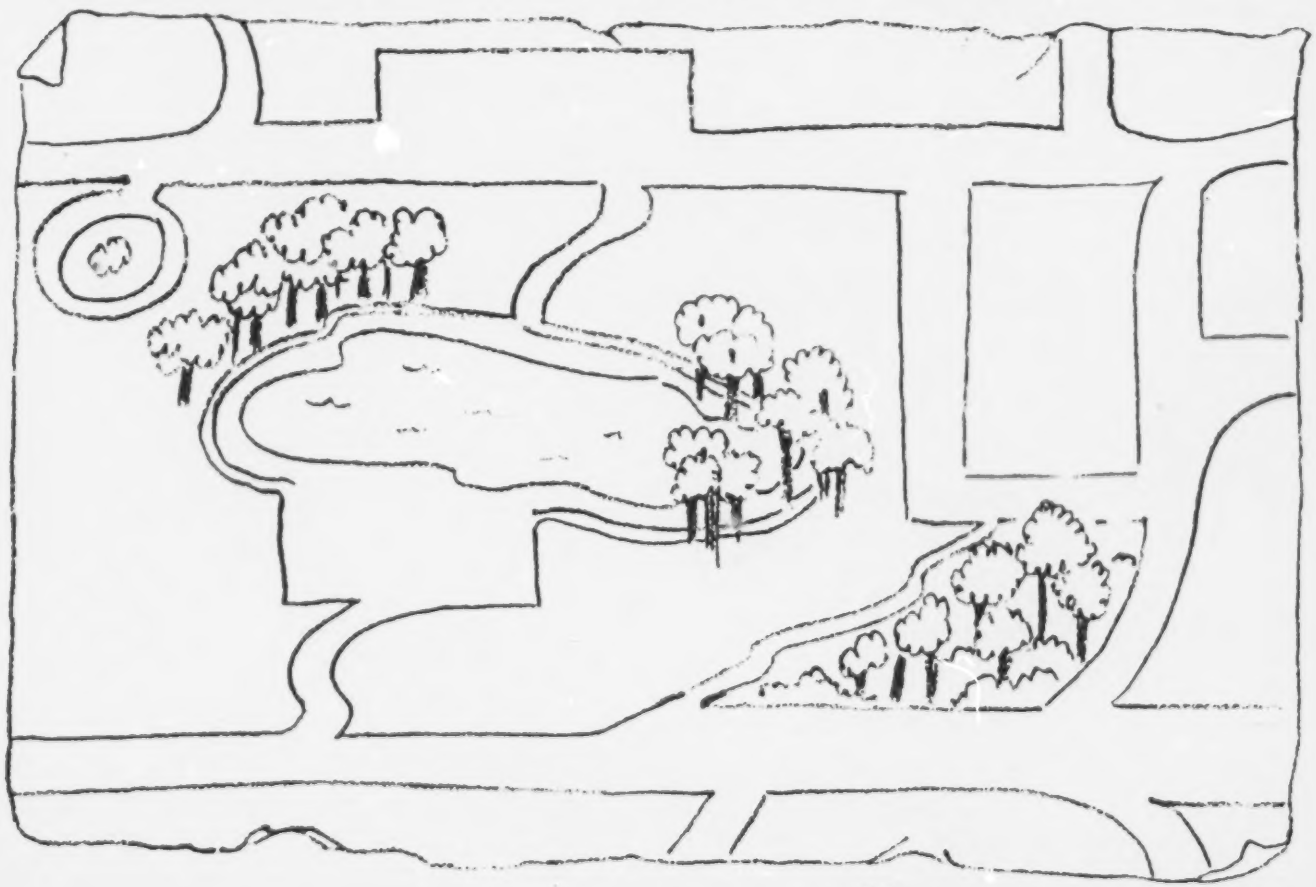
You and your child can make a road map with an old plastic tablecloth (use the felt side), a plain shower curtain or even a grocery bag cut open. Using permanent markers, draw roads, a lake, a forest, etc. Be sure to leave plenty of empty space for your child to add houses, shopping centers, playgrounds or whatever he wishes to his town, using his blocks, Legos or any other building materials.

After a family outing to the zoo or even a trip to the library, it would be fun to "represent" on his map the different buildings and landmarks he saw on the way. Was the bank or the school closer to home? What was next to the library? This is a perfect time to reinforce some of the position words that he is beginning to understand, such as near, far, next to, behind, left and right.

Block Measurement Towers

Children love to make comparisons and size is one of their favorites. You can show your child how to use a block as a unit of measure. Have him build towers "as big as" a piece of furniture in the room (wastebasket, chair, table, etc.). Encourage him to judge carefully if his towers are exactly the same as the furniture. Use comparison words, such as big, bigger and biggest.

Next, choose smaller items to measure—stand-up books, dolls or toy cars—and have your child measure them with block towers. Compare these to the furniture towers. Ask, "Which towers are bigger?"



Apply and Express

Construct a Dome

One of the cheapest and most fascinating ways to build is with a hollow tube made from rolled newspaper or sheets of paper. Simply start in one corner with a full newspaper page and tightly roll to the opposite corner. Then tape to complete tube. Over a period of time roll many paper tubes so you have 20 or 30. Work and figure out how you can build a structure you can get inside of. Some ideas—corners are taped to hold construction together.

What else can you build? Architects need to test the construction they build and so can you. Using a paper clip opened up like a hook, hang objects on the connections of your building to see if it's strong. Test other joints, too. What did you discover? How can you make a joining point stronger? Children and adults alike can learn a lot about building.

Buildings in Children's Literature

(Create a plan and carry it out.)

Children's classic stories are a great starting place to enrich your child's knowledge of building. The buildings in many children's stories are as important as the characters themselves.

Where would the 3 billy goats be without a bridge? Where would the 3 pigs be without a house of straw, one of sticks and one of bricks? Where would Cinderella be without a castle and where would Goldilocks go if the bears didn't have a cottage?

Read the above stories with your child so he is familiar with them (you may have already). Talk about the stories so he can remember them and know them well. The focus is on buildings but the stories are rich sources of language and learning.

Building Blueprints

After reading and talking about the stories with your child, tell her that she is going to build one of the buildings from her favorite story. Ask which one she would like to build—billy goats' bridge, pig's house, Cinderella's castle or the bears' cottage or any other building from a story. Then make a written plan. Ask your child what she would like to build with. Review some options with your child. (Hopefully, you will have explored some of the building materials in Explore and Discover.)

Over a period of time, let your child build the building of choice. Place it on a board or piece of wood so it can be moved and brought out to work on again and again. Ask your child, "Did you have any problems building your house?" "How did you solve it?" Discuss with your child the completed building. Is she satisfied with it?

How Many Ways

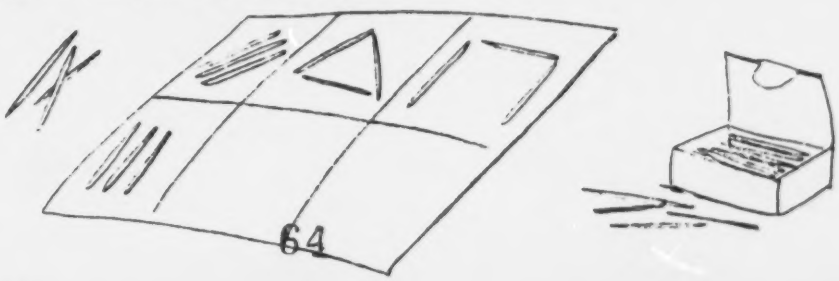
(Develop fluency and creativity.)

It's an important skill to be able to think up many solutions to a problem and then choose one. The ability to give many different answers to a problem quickly is called "fluency."

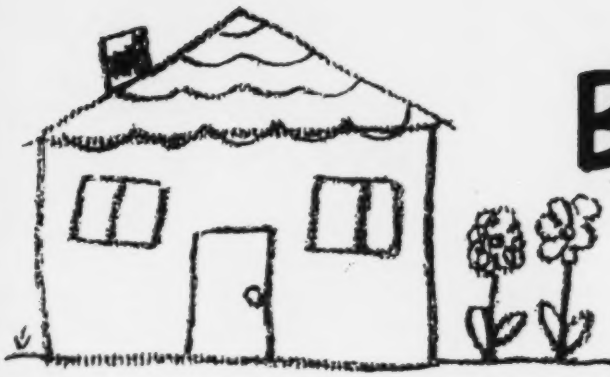
Present your child with a box of toothpicks and tell her she can only use 3 at a time. Give her a sheet of paper folded in rectangles. She must glue her 3 toothpicks in each rectangle. Each time she glues down 3 toothpicks they must be placed differently than the one before, so every rectangle has a different design in it.

To make the activity more challenging, give her a box of toothpicks and a bag of mini-marshmallows or packing chips. This time she can use only 5 sticks at a time and build 3-D houses. How many *different* constructions can she build?

Praise her on her ability to use her brain to think of different ways.



This is the place for your child to make a written plan of the building she chooses to make (see *Building Blueprints* activity).



Boxes and Bags

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

Boxes and bags are two of the favorite toys of a young child. Many moms and dads have watched in surprise as a young child unwraps a present and plays for hours with the box, ignoring the expensive present.

It's not hard to understand because boxes and bags stimulate a child's imagination…his creativity. A box or a bag can represent anything! This gives the child a sense of power of control over his environment. By his own action a child can turn a box into a house or a T.V. or a pen to cage a wild dinosaur.

It's so important to develop the creative problem-solving skills in young children. This life skill helps them learn to be planners of possibilities rather than reactors who take no control over their own actions. When you create, you plan ahead. You think, you make choices, you feel joy and satisfaction in accomplishment. To nurture a sense of creativity in a child is to give him or her a lifetime gift. Providing your child with a rich environment full of boxes and bags will stimulate his creativity.

Because boxes and bags can be closed up tight, they project a sense of mystery to both children and adults. What's inside? As parents you can use this natural sense of mystery, this curiosity of what's inside to teach many skills and concepts to your child. One skill that seems to lend itself to boxes and bags is how objects are alike and different because it's fun to gather prized collections of objects in boxes.

When children learn about *same* and *different*, they go through a process of simple to complex. First, they handle and explore lots of familiar objects and they can't find ones that are different from each other. Later, they can then sort out ones that look the same. Still later, if you make up a simple group of objects, two the same, one different, they can select the one that's different.

As they've been sorting, you as a parent have usually been talking. You've been using the words that describe the objects. The vocabulary of color, shape, size, use, sense. Children need lots of experience using this vocabulary before they can tell you how objects are different, then the same, and finally, why an object doesn't belong. Many years and experiences precede that ability.

That's why your job as a parent is so important—your ability to create a rich, creative environment full of materials like boxes and bags. The time you take to talk to your child about the way things look and how they are alike and different can make a real difference in your child's ability to learn and be a problem solver.

Explore and Discover

Collection Boxes

Save several sturdy boxes to hold collections made by you and your child. Shoe boxes work well. To make them extra durable, cover them with colorful contact paper.

The two of you should decide what kinds of objects to save and collect over a period of time—My Little Pony barrettes, baseball cards, rocks, sea shells, bottle caps, buttons, small cars, etc.—whatever is interesting to your child. Emphasize the idea that a collection is a group of objects that are alike in some way.

When your child has a good-size collection, show him how to use his prized objects for sorting and classifying. Explore different ways he can group them together. There is no right or wrong way to group them, as long as he has a reason for doing so. Encourage him to talk about what he has done.

Save Those Boxes

Instead of discarding the boxes that gifts and other things come in, find a place to keep them where your child will have easy access to them. (The styrofoam packing chips that come with computers and other fragile items are great to save, also.) Try to save a variety of different size and shaped boxes. You also need to make available other interesting materials that your child may use to create with the boxes, such as masking tape, pipe cleaners, wrapping paper, ribbon and bows, feathers or whatever scraps you have in your home.

You will be surprised at what imaginative creations the boxes will become. They may take the form of a fire station, a turtle, a dinosaur or his own neighborhood. It is important that you don't get rid of his creations right away, as he may want to come back to them later and change them or even turn them into something completely different!

Large boxes that refrigerators or television sets come in are also wonderful to save. If you don't have room in your house, put them in the basement or even outdoors. Mom or Dad can use a paring knife or exacto knife to make the openings or doors where the child wants them. Your child and his friends will then have hours of fun pretending and role-playing in their club house, school bus, or spaceship, play kitchen, T.V.—wherever their imaginations take them!

... and Bags

Have your child help you collect a variety of bags—lunch bags, grocery bags, colorful gift bags, shiny bakery bags, etc. These will be used later in carrying out some of the creative activities included later in this guide.

Safety Reminder: Children should never be allowed to play with plastic bags because of danger of suffocation.

Cereal Boxes

At breakfast time draw your child's attention to the print on his favorite cereal box. Talk about the pictures, read the print to him and show him where the nutritional information is included. Children need to begin to understand that things in print give us important information. Adults read the print on cereal boxes to find out what ingredients are in cereals and if they are good for us. Ask your child to find some of the letters in his name on the box—a 4, a 7.

Box Sculpture

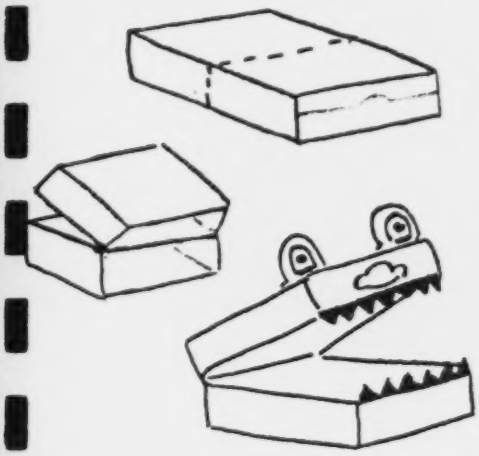
After you have collected many boxes of different sizes and shapes, let your child explore by stacking and arranging them in a variety of ways—side by side, on top of each other, in line horizontally, in line vertically, corner to corner, etc. Allow him to experiment with the boxes until he finds a particular design that he likes best.

Glue or tape the boxes together to make a sculpture. When he is finished, your child can give his creation a name and put it in a special spot in your house!

Listen and Understand

Feed The Monster

To make a monster, collect a cereal box and cut three sides of the box to make an opening and bend it back as shown. Decorate the box so that the front has eyes and teeth, etc. You and your child can make it open and close its mouth. You're now ready to "Feed the Monster" using a variety of junk from your junk drawer—buttons, noodles, screws, nails, bits of paper you will put on the monster and tell your child what the monster wants to eat.



The monster wants to eat small things. Your child then will sort through the junk and feed the monster only small things. When it's your child's turn to be the monster, he gets to choose the category, like big, all red things, square, metal, shiny, plastic, etc., are only some of the choices. Then you feed the monster. This activity helps your child think about objects that are the same.

Size Wise

Show your child 5 or 6 different size boxes. Guide him in putting them in order from *biggest* to *smallest* (like steps). Mix them up; then see if he can do this independently. Can he "nest" the boxes, one inside another, from biggest to smallest?

Now, looking at one box at a time, can he suggest one or more objects that might fit inside each box? List child's suggestions. If he needs help, ask "Which box could hold a can of soup? a basketball? a pair of earrings?"

Grab Bag

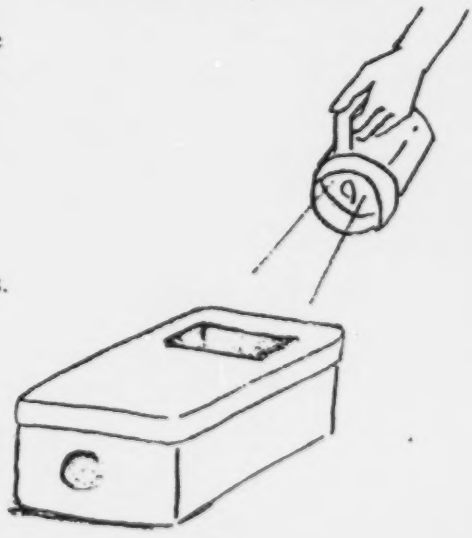
Bags can be used as the basis for a counting game. Place items, such as pennies, beans, noodles, buttons in a bag. Two or more can play this game. Each one reaches in and grabs a hand full of objects (whatever you've decided to place in your bag). They then put the objects in a row and count them.

o o o o o o
o o o

The other person grabs and counts. You then decide who has more and who has less items. "How many more?" is a challenging question you can ask. You could predict who has more before you actually count. Comparing and counting are important skills.

Peek Boxes

It's fun to discover what's in a box just by peeking in a small hole. This activity will expand your child's ability to describe what he sees. Collect a shoe box with a lid and cut a hole in one end (for peeking). Also cut a small rectangle in the lid of the shoe box so you will be able to shine a flashlight through the hole to light up what's inside the box. Place a familiar object in the box. Shine the flashlight on it and ask your child to peek in and describe what he sees. If he's not able to, ask him what color is it? What shape? What's it made of (metal, china, plastic)? What do you use it for? When you take a turn peeking in the box, you'll be able to model for your child how to use words that describe. Later on, choose things to place in the peek box that are unfamiliar to him. Can he describe them and guess their use?



Mystery Boxes

Use some of the different size boxes from the above activity. Find objects in your home to hide in these boxes. Give him simple clues to discover what is hidden in the box. Talk about how his guess may change as new clues are added.

Example:

Clue	*Guess*
It's round	A ball
It grows on a tree	An orange
It's red	An apple
It has one seed inside	A cherry

Let your child have a chance to hide an object in the mystery box for you or other family members. Can he give clues to help you guess what it is? It is challenging for preschool children to give clues. They will probably need guidance and examples in doing this.

Just as children need to be read to, to become good readers, they need to have the opportunity to do pretend writing to become good writers in the future.

The Big Toy Caper

Using shopping bags (or cardboard boxes or plastic crates), label the bags with pictures to help your child get organized in clearing up his room or play area. One bag could be blocks, another, toy cars, still another, small dolls. This is a real life experience in classifying. Tell your child you're going to play the clean-up game. Can he get the right toys in the right bag? You could use a 3-minute egg timer to see if he can beat the clock in getting toys in the bags.

Make A Mailbox

To encourage "pretend writing," help your child make his own mailbox. You will need the following materials:

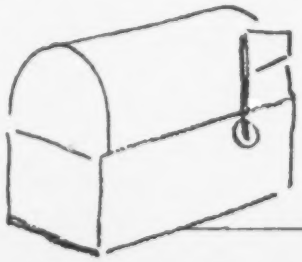
- shoe box
- oatmeal box (or a piece of cardboard to curve)
- construction paper or contact paper
- tape or glue
- scissors
- paper brad

Here's how:

1. Cut out a flag for the mailbox from the top of the shoe box.
2. Color the flag.
3. Carefully make a small hole in the bottom of the flagpole and in the side of the shoe box.
4. Attach the flagpole to the box with the brad so that the flag moves up and down.
5. Cut the oatmeal box in half lengthwise.
6. Glue or tape one half of the oatmeal box to the top rim of the shoe box.
7. Cover it with construction or contact paper.
8. Write your child's name on it.

Now your child will be anxious to "write letters" to you and other family members. You will probably notice that he includes some of the letters from his name or other letters he knows in his pretend writing. Take time to let him "read" his letter to you. Then be sure to answer his letter by sending one back in his mailbox.

You will also be encouraging prewriting by making a collection of writing materials (various kinds of paper, envelopes, stamps that you get in the mail, pencils, markers, crayons, etc.) and keeping them in a box for your child to use. When he has a need or desire to "write" he will know just where to get the materials he needs.

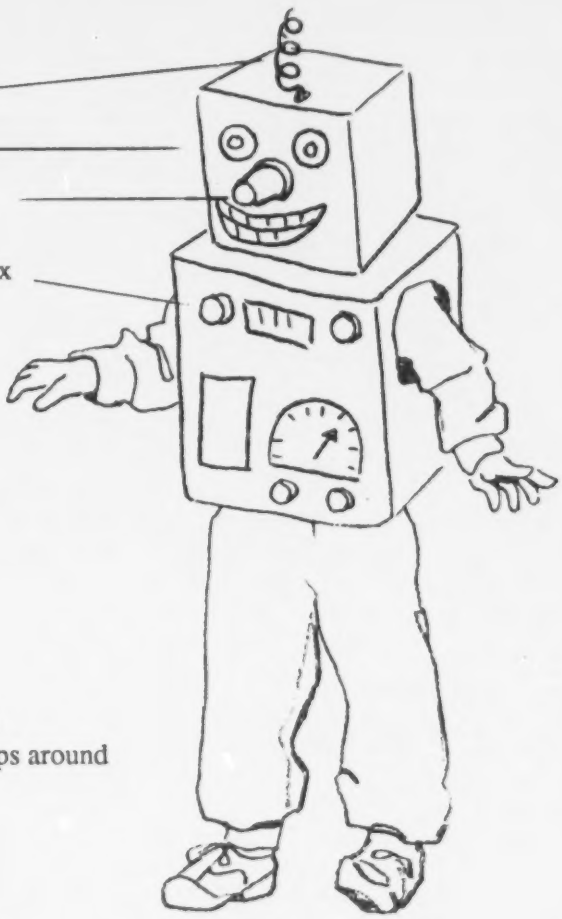


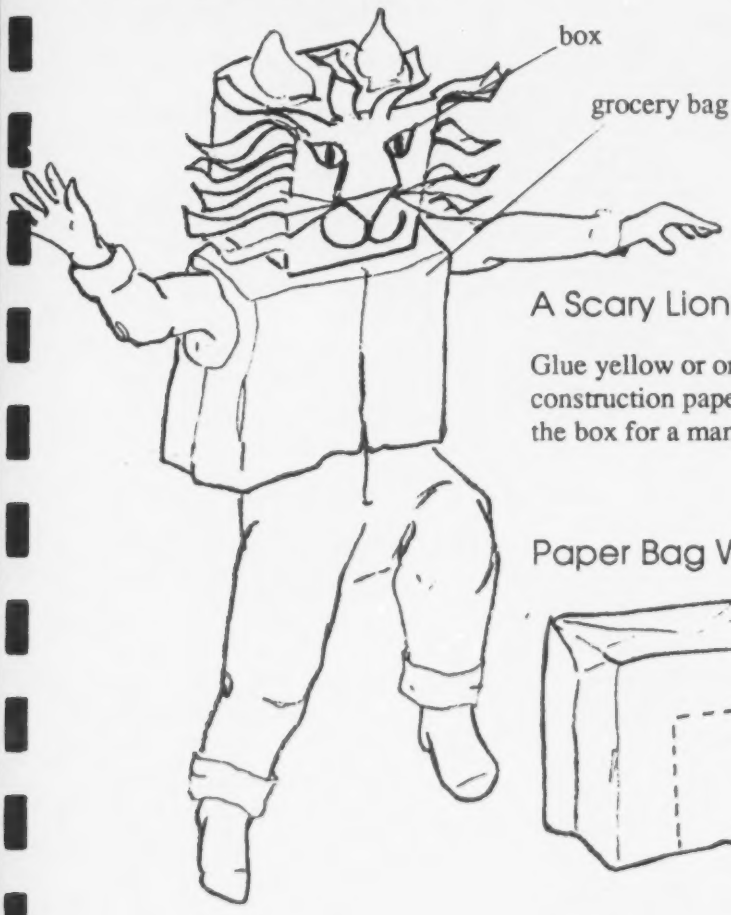
Apply and Express

Costumes from Bags and Boxes

To encourage dramatic play and the re-enactment of favorite stories, you and your child can work together to make amazingly simple costumes from paper bags and cardboard boxes. Here are a few examples that you may try:

A Robot

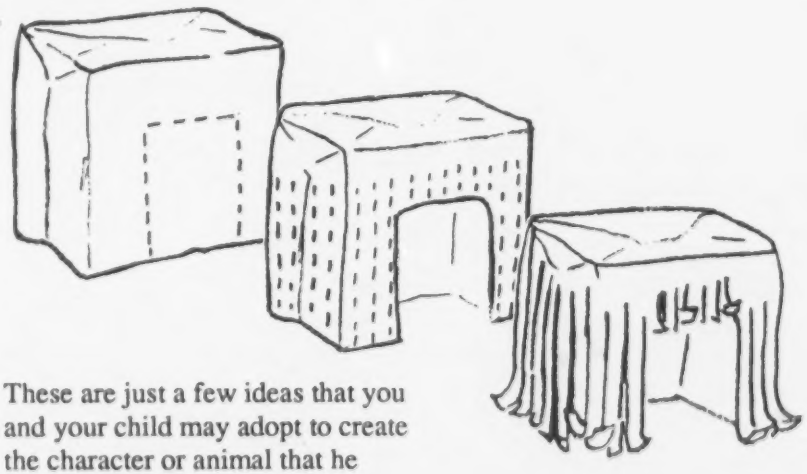




A Scary Lion

Glue yellow or orange construction paper strips around the box for a mane.

Paper Bag Wig



These are just a few ideas that you and your child may adopt to create the character or animal that he wants to become!

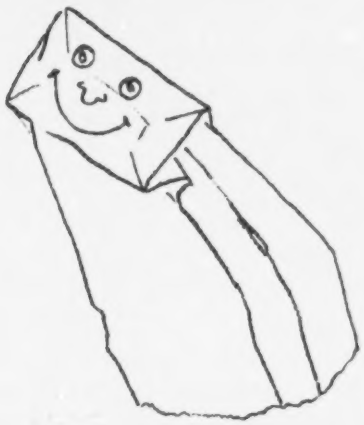
Puppets from Boxes and Bags

Using puppets give children an opportunity to make choices, think and plan as they decide how to create a puppet.

Provide for your child a puppet - making box which would include:

- brown lunch bags
- small boxes (like empty pudding or gelatin boxes)
- markers
- paste or rubber cement
- yarn - cotton
- colored paper
- brass fasteners (brads)
- paper punch
- fabric scraps

These are only some of the materials you could put in your child's box. Add whatever can be glued on. Use your imagination to spark his imagination.



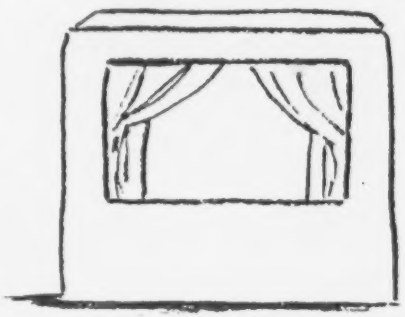
Show your child how to place his hand inside a bag to make it move. Show where the puppet's face is located. Talk with your child in ways he might use the materials provided for hair, eyes, fur, ears, tail, etc. Ask him what he might choose, then let him begin on his own. Talk with him about his finished puppet. What's its name? How does it sound when it talks?

Puppet II

When using a small pudding box, follow the directions for making the monster-eating box and discuss with your child how he might create a face.

Other puppets can be created from raisin boxes on a popsicle stick.

Also stuffed paper bags tied on a toilet paper tube.



A large refrigerator box also can be a great puppet stage.

Create a Grocery Store

Grocery stores are wonderful laboratories for learning all kinds of concepts. As you take your child along on weekly trips, take the time to point out such things as the smell of fresh fruits and vegetables, the use of scales in the produce department, and how foods are classified in different areas of the store—dairy foods, bakery goods, etc.

It also would be a lot of fun and a great learning experience to create your own grocery store at home. Plan ahead with your child, as it will take the two of you several days to collect the things you will need:

- save empty food containers—boxes, cartons, plastic bottles, etc.
- grocery bags of different sizes
- a toy cash register or shoe box to use for play money (you may also make the money)
- large cardboard boxes lined up side by side for grocery shelves
- a toy shopping cart or a cardboard box with a rope attached for pulling it

Your grocery store will then be ready to open for business with you and your child taking turns playing the roles of the customer cashier, bagger, etc. Add props to the store periodically and make it available for a long time, as your child will want to invite his friends to come to his grocery store.

After a trip to the post office, your child may also want to use the mailbox he has made to role-play with you and others, the letter carrier's job in sorting mail, collecting mail from the mailbox and delivering it to houses.

Hit the Critter

Targeting Eye-Hand Coordination

Have your child draw a funny "critter" on a brown paper bag (lunch bag size). Then help him stuff the bag with newspaper. Using a long string (4 feet) or piece of yarn, tie the top closed and suspend the bag from the top of a doorway so that it hangs at your child's shoulder level. Now have him "bat" at the critter with an empty paper towel tube, first holding it with one hand, then both hands—one at each end. Can he do this with his eyes closed? To help your child learn a numeral, draw one on the bag. Every time he hits the bag he says the number (6), etc.

Bag Story

Place objects inside a large bag from around your home, such as toy cars and animals, household items, doll furniture, etc.

Start a story, perhaps about going on a picnic. After a good lead-in to the story, have your child pick an object out of the bag. Encourage him to continue your story including the object he drew from the bag. If your child is inexperienced with story telling, merely get him to say the name of the object and a characteristic of the object. Example: The child picks out a plastic cup and says "a blue cup." Then you continue the story including his object. Continue the story using as many of the objects in the bag as possible. Other members of the family may want to take part in the story telling, also.

It's In The Bag

Numeral Recognition

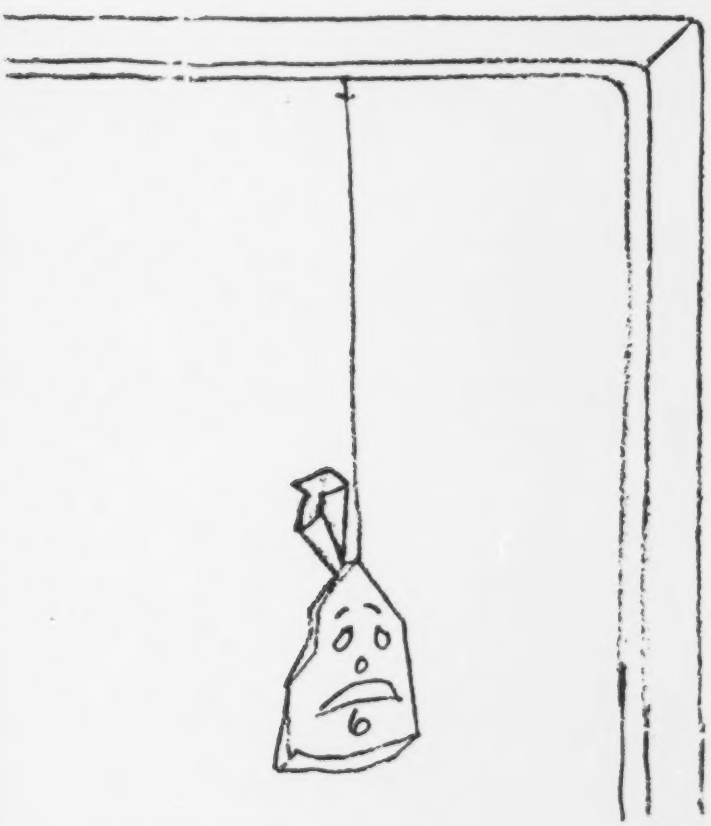
For this activity gather several grocery bags and write a large number on each—the numbers that your child is learning. Then have him stand about 3-4 feet from the bags that are standing open in a row and toss a bean bag, Nerf ball or rolled up pair of socks into the number bag that you call out. Do this many times for lots of practice.

Cardboard Box Obstacle Course

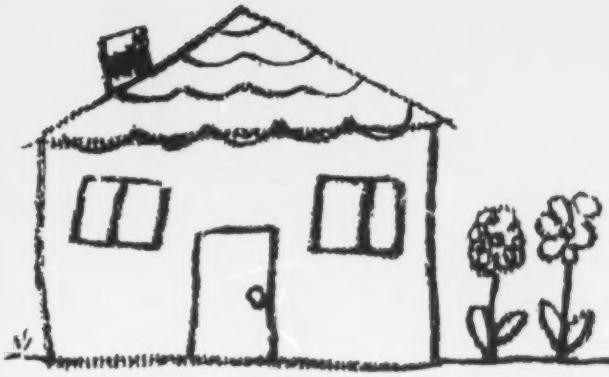
Position Words, Motor Planning

You will need a large area, such as a basement or back yard, to do this activity.

Use some of the large cardboard boxes that you have saved to make an obstacle course for your child and his playmates to maneuver. With your child, place them in a variety of ways and positions, stack 2 or 3, build a wall, open the ends and slide several together to make a tunnel. Now give the children directions for moving through the obstacle course. "Go around the wall. Jump over the bridge. Crawl through the tunnel." Be sure to use the appropriate "position words" that you want them to follow. Then change the course the next time, giving new directions.



What activity did you enjoy most in this guide? Why?



Animals
Home Activities

Dear Parents:

Children are fascinated by the rich and varied world of animals we find around us.

Babies can't resist touching the wet nose of the family dog. Older children wonder about the rabbits hopping in our yards.

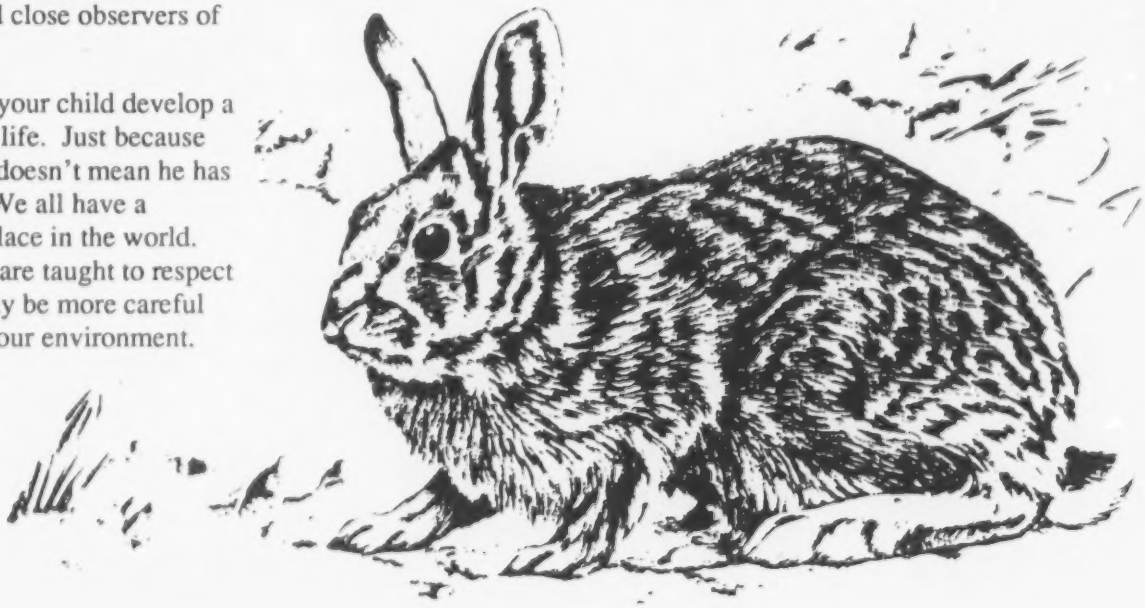
As parents, you can enhance your child's learning by building on this curiosity about animals. You can point out animals that share your immediate world. Children will then become budding naturalists and close observers of nature.

You can help your child develop a respect for all life. Just because he sees a bug doesn't mean he has to squash it. We all have a purpose and place in the world. Children who are taught to respect animal life may be more careful conservers of our environment.

Caring for a pet at home—even sharing just one small job in pet care—develops responsibility. Most young children are self-centered in their view of the world. Caring for another living thing increases their ability to think of someone or something else with kindness and compassion.

Sharing the world of animals large and small with your child is like giving him a box of treasures. How exciting to find out how whales leap, eagles soar, and robins care for their babies!

When you and your child focus on the abundance of animal life, living becomes an adventure!



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Explore and Discover

A Trip to the Zoo

Children of all ages love to visit the zoo. On your next visit:

- Talk about the names of the different animals.
- Look for animals that are big or small.
- Look for animals with long tails or short tails.
- Find animals with horns and hooves (all new vocabulary words).

Backyard Animals

We all have many interesting animals living as close as our own backyard. Look out your windows and observe the rabbits, squirrels, robins, cardinals, woodpeckers, opossums, the neighborhood dogs, cats and mice.

Talk about how these animals behave, where they live and what they eat. Hang bits of string and cotton in bushes and trees. Observe what the birds do. Ask your child, "What do you think they will do with the string?" (The birds will use the string to build their nests. You may find a completed nest with your string in it.)

Other types of animal homes are:

- holes in trees - woodpecker
- holes in the ground - snakes and spiders
- large clumps of leaves high up in the trees - squirrels

Micro-World

Introduce your child to the abundant world of small animals and insects. Your child has probably discovered pill bugs because they are in most yards. Children like to watch them roll into a ball. Many children call them "roly-polys."

Turn over a cement block, board or log in your backyard. Discuss with your child what you find and why it is there.

- Worms eat tunnels through the earth and change the soil into fertilizer.
- Worms eat tunnels through the earth and loosen the soil for plants as well as help oxygen and water get to the roots of plants and trees.
- Millipedes and centipedes (some call them "thousand leggers") and pill bugs help break down wood so it will become rich soil. These are nature's garbagemen. They turn dead plants into matter that can be reused. They are the original recyclers!

By telling your child what worms and insects do, you're helping him a respect for all life, even the smallest things.

Go On a Penny Walk in Your Backyard

Gather a piece of string or yarn and a penny, take your child and go on a walk in your backyard. When you flip the penny and get heads, you walk to the right. When you flip the coin and get tails, you walk to the left. After walking with a few flips of the coin, stop and make a circle with the yarn.

Ask your child, "What did you find inside the yarn? Were there any small animals or insects? What were they doing? What's the biggest object you found? The softest? The hardest? The roughest? How were the things you found alike or different?" (If your child can't tell you, you can name some differences.)

Listen and Understand

Guess the Stuffed Animals

Set up some stuffed animals or animal toys, three that are the same and one that doesn't belong. Ask, "Which one doesn't belong?" (You might use a dog, cat, dinosaur, monkey). Because most stuffed animals are plush, it's hard to use animal coverings to tell how they are different. You could find three green animals and one not the same color, or three large ones and one small one. If your child cannot tell you why they don't belong, you can model the language for them, but give some ideas. ("Let's see—the dog, monkey and cat are small, but the dinosaur doesn't belong because he's so big.")

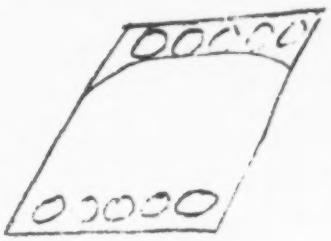
Animal Tails

Cut several 6-inch-long lengths of string or yarn. Tell your child these are animal tails. Have your child use the "tails" to measure different items around the house by placing them end to end. How many tails long is the table, the bed, the toy box?

Use cotton balls to represent rabbit tails. Measure by laying cotton balls next to an item from top to bottom. Count how many balls (or tails) are in the row.

Animal Crackers

Have your child line up five animal crackers at the top of a piece of paper and five crackers at the bottom. Tell the following story:



There were ten little animals playing in the jungle. They decided to lie down and take a little nap. Five went to sleep on the soft green grass at the top of the hill. Five slept at the bottom of the hill. (Explain that they have the same number so they are equal sets.)

While they slept, hunters came to capture animals for the circus. They crept softly, softly (move fingers) and captured one animal at the top of the hill (hide one under a cup). The animals did not wake up. (Tell your child to count and see if the two groups of animals are the same. Which has more? Which has less?)

Continue telling the story, sneaking up on the sleeping animals and capturing them from the top or bottom of the hill until they are all gone. Ask questions each time as to which group has more or less. When you're finished telling the story, let your child eat the crackers.

Animal Stories

Children love stories about animals, either real or fictional. These stories lend themselves to many activities. After reading an animal story:

- Use the pictures of animals in the book to count animal parts (how many legs, tails, etc.).
- Pretend to be an animal in the story. ("What if you were a lion and lived in the jungle? What if you were a spider spinning a web?")
- Draw a picture of an animal in the story.
- Make up a new story ending. (What else could have happened to the wolf in "The Three Little Pigs?")

What Animal Am I?

Pantomime the actions of an animal: gallop like a horse; swing arms like an elephant's trunk. Have your child try to guess what animal you are. Reverse roles and have your child do the actions and you guess the animal.

Listen and Understand

Animal Sounds

Take a walk with your child to a farm, to the zoo or in your own backyard. Record the different sounds the animals make (birds, cats, dogs, people). When you return home, play back the sounds and see if your child can identify them.

Also using a tape recorder, you can create your own animal sounds to play back for your child to identify. Have your child make animal sounds for you to identify. Children love hearing themselves played back on a tape recorder.

Animal Coverings

Increase your child's understanding of animal coverings. Many young children think birds are covered with fur.

Mammals—have fur or hair. The fur is thick or thin and varies in color. There's a reason for the kind of fur an animal has. Thick fur helps a mammal keep warm, while thin fur helps them stay cool. A striped or spotted fur helps animals hide from predators.

Reptiles—are covered with scales. These include snakes, turtles, crocodiles, lizards and the prehistoric dinosaurs. Sometimes the scales are hard and thick, sometimes they are thin.

Birds—are covered with feathers. The short, fluffy feathers are called *down*, and these keep the bird warm. The long feathers with a hard shaft in the middle are the *flight* feathers which help the bird fly.

When you see an animal, touch it if you can, and talk about whether it's covered with fur, feathers or scales.

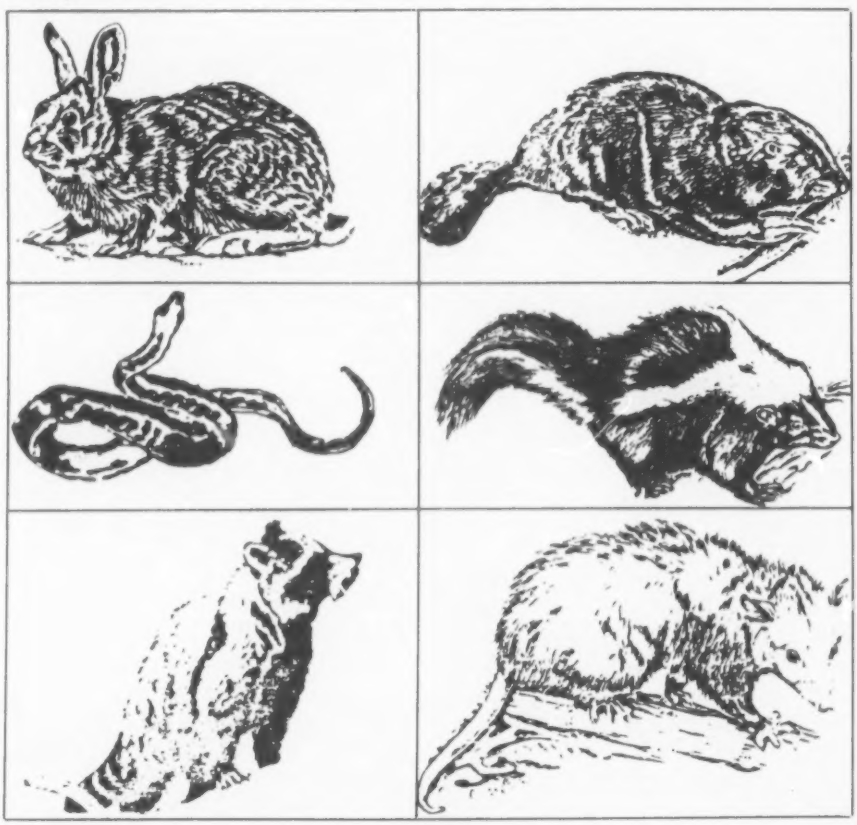
Sort the Animals

Using the pictures provided, help your child sort them in different ways: by animal coverings, by the way they move (fly, hop, walk, run, swim, etc.), by how many legs they have (4, 2, or none).

Camouflage

Many animals use their coloring to hide from their enemies. Demonstrate to your child how a white object placed on a white sheet of paper is hard to see from a distance. (That's how a snow bunny hides in winter—he is white and the snow is white.)

Ask your child: "Where is the best place for a yellow lion to hide? A brown rabbit? A green frog?"



Apply and Express

The ability to make something new from common, everyday items is a problem-solving skill. Companies like IBM send their executives to "school" to learn to think this way.

Create-A-Pet

Create an animal from items around the house (toothpicks, styrofoam pieces, paper cups, yogurt cartons, buttons, straws, glue, etc.). These are suggestions. Your child may have a better idea of materials to use.

Have your child name his pet. Make a book about the pet. What does he eat? Where does he play? What sound does he make, etc.? What's his name?

Habitat for Pet

Create a place for your child's "pet" to live. Use natural materials in a shoe box (sticks, grass, shells, dirt). What could you use to represent water or the woods?

Peanut Butter Creatures

4 Tbsp.	Peanut butter
1 Tbsp.	Honey
1 Tbsp.	Wheat germ or crushed cereal
2-1/2 Tbsp.	Powdered milk

Mix together to form an easy-to-handle playdough. Form into oval shapes. Add eyes, legs, wings, etc. Pretzel sticks and marshmallows could make legs and tails.

Pill Bug Palace

Make an observation box for pill bugs (roly-polys) out of a shoe box. Cut a hole in one end of the lid of the box. Remove lid, put a partition in the center of the box, but leave a crawl space under the partition so the pill bugs can get under it. Put several pill bugs in each end of the box. Put the lid back on and wait 20 minutes to see what happens. Remove the lid and look.

Cover the hole in the lid and repeat this experiment, putting a damp paper towel in one end of the box. Do the animals prefer a damp or dry surface?

What kinds of things do they like to eat? (Try raw fruits and vegetables from your refrigerator, leaves from your yard.) When you are finished with your experiments, let your pill bugs go.

Bug Catchers (Group project)

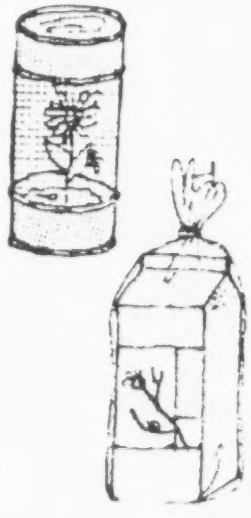
Collect insects in any of the following:

A. TUNA CAN CATCHER: Use two tuna cans. Remove labels and one lid from each can. Cut a wire screen that is 6" x 12". Fold each edge of screen approximately 1/4" to smooth exposed rows of wire prongs. Bend screen into a tube which will fit inside can. Staple overlapped edges. Place tube in can. Fill can with grass. Catch bug. Place second can over opening.

Variation: Fill one tuna can with plaster of Paris. Insert plastic flowers into wet plaster. Place wire tube into plaster. Allow to dry. Other tuna can serves as the removable lid.

B. BOTTLE CATCHER: Use clear plastic bottle which has a screw top lid. Perforate lid for air. Add twigs so bug will have a place to climb.

C. MILK CARTON CATCHER: Cut windows in two opposite sides of a milk carton. Place carton in the foot of a nylon stocking. Place bug in carton. Secure top of stocking by tying knot or using twister seal.



Apply and Express

Mammals on the Move

Mammals are animals with fur or hair who nurse their young. Their babies are born alive and they move in marvelous ways.

Some are *walkers and runners*—like cats and wolves, dogs and bears.

Some are *jumpers*—like kangaroos and gerbils.

Some are *diggers*—like moles and woodchucks and mice.

Some are *swingers*—like monkeys that live in trees.

Some are *gliders*—like flying squirrels.

Some are *fliers*—like bats.

Some are *swimmers*—like whales and dolphins.

Play with your child and try out all the different ways that mammals move. Then name some animals and try to figure out how they move, such as kangaroo, mole, deer, bat, skunk, dog, elephant. Whenever you see a mammal picture in a book or magazine, figure out how he moves and use the word "jumper," "digger," etc. It will increase your child's understanding and vocabulary.

Bird's Nest Games

Gather some brown paper lunch bags, rocks or pebbles or cotton balls. Squeeze the sides of the bags down until they make a circle with a small rim. This makes a nest.

Use rocks or cotton balls for eggs.

- If your child needs practice counting, name a numeral such as 5 and your child must count five eggs and put them into each nest.

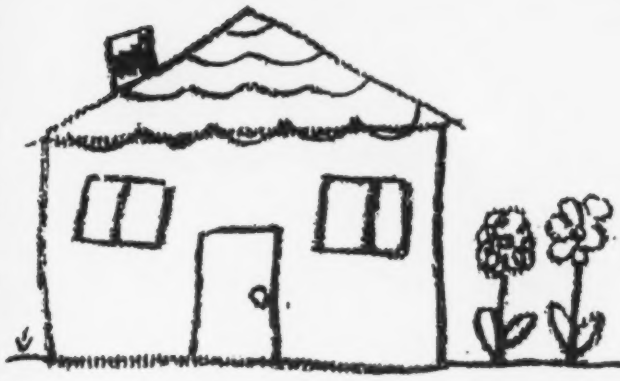
- If your child needs help with recognizing a numeral and counting, write the numeral on the nest and then tell your child to count that many.

- If your child can count and recognize numerals, play this game:

  "How many fell out of the nest?"

  - Place 3 eggs in the nest.
  - Your child counts them—"There are three." Child hides his eyes and you take some eggs away.
  - Ask: "How many eggs fell out of the nest?"

  If he easily guesses 3 eggs, move to 4, then 5, 6.



Spring

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

Spring provides your child the perfect opportunity to learn about things that grow: fruits, vegetables, flowers and animals. Giving your child the first-hand experience of growing and caring for living things will make Spring and the growing process more meaningful.

A child with a small vegetable or flower garden can watch the growth, notice the changes, see the size differences and observe how plants bloom and bear fruit. By sharing this growing experience with your child and talking together about what you see happening, you are helping develop vocabulary skills and building language understanding.

In planting a small garden, your child can gain more than just flowers and vegetables. This teaches responsibility. To make your child's gardening adventure successful, demonstrate how to plant and care for a garden. Show him how to:

- break up the dirt
- plant seeds
- water plants
- identify and pull up weeds

Your child will feel a sense of pride and accomplishment as he sees his garden flourish. The garden will provide him with problem-solving activities such as:

1. Where can I plant the garden?
2. How can I break up the dirt?
3. What will I use to water the plants?
4. What will I do with the flowers or vegetables that grow in my garden?

A garden also helps children understand the passage of time and the value of patience.

A Poem for Spring

The tiny plants push through the ground.
Robins build nests from things they've found.
The sun feels warm on my bare toes.
The breeze smells fragrant to my nose.

–by Early Education Staff

Explore and Discover

Take a Spring Walk

Take a walk outside with your child to look for signs of Spring. Talk about the things you will find. Help your child see the difference between a dead leaf left over from Fall and a new leaf beginning to grow. As you take your walk, look for a bird's nest, baby rabbits, baby birds, buds on a tree or flowers, insects and the difference in the color of grass and leaves.

Talk about how the weather and temperature are changing. Use your five senses as you walk. Let your child touch a bud, smell a flower, look at a bird's nest, listen to a bird singing. Using all of your senses helps your child to explore, discover and learn new things about his environment.

What's Inside

On your Spring walk, bring back a branch with young buds ready to open. Examine the branch with your child. Ask, "What do you think is inside the buds?" Place the branch in water and watch what happens to the new buds. How do they change? What was inside?

Field Trips

Spring is a wonderful time to visit the zoo or a local farm. Flowering trees, spring flowers, newborn animals and spring planting help children understand that Spring is a time for new beginnings and to wonder at the miracle of a tiny seed growing into a plant.

What They Took	What They Didn't Take
Why?	Why?

Plants Need Sunlight

Use a small plant in a flower pot and place it in a shoe box with a lid that has been cut in half. Place the lid over the plant.

Place the box near a window. After several days observe what is happening to the plant. Why is the plant growing toward the other side of the shoe box?

Building a Nest

Let your child help a bird build a nest. Gather some objects together from inside and outside your house. Some suggestions are string, dryer lint, small twigs, yarn, buttons, blocks, rocks, grass, small leaves, cotton, hair, etc. Put these objects in a paper lunch bag. Fold the open bag down as far as you can and place it outside in the yard. Let your child predict what he thinks the birds will take to build their nest. Watch from your window to see if the birds take anything. Leave the bag outside for a week then check to see which objects are missing. What did they take? What didn't they take? Why? Write down your child's answers on the paper provided or let your child write her own answer using her own writing.

Listen and Understand

How Do Plants Get A Drink?

Add red or blue food coloring to a glass of water. Then take a piece of celery with leaves and cut an inch off the bottom of the stalk. Place the celery in the colored water. Each day check to see what is happening to the celery. Is the water going up in the celery? Why is it going up? (Plants need water.)

See how long it takes for the colored water to move up the stalk to the leaves. It may take several days for this to occur.

Another way to show that plants do drink and need water is to take two stalks of celery and place one in a glass with water and one in a glass without water. After several days, look at the celery. Does one look different from the other? Why?

Jack and the Beanstalk

Read "Jack and the Beanstalk." Discuss the difference between fantasy gardens such as Jack's and real gardens. Jack's beanstalk grew up into the sky and a giant lived above the clouds. Do you think your bean plant will grow as big as Jack's? Do real gardens grow that big? Do you think a giant could live above the clouds?

Beans In A Jar

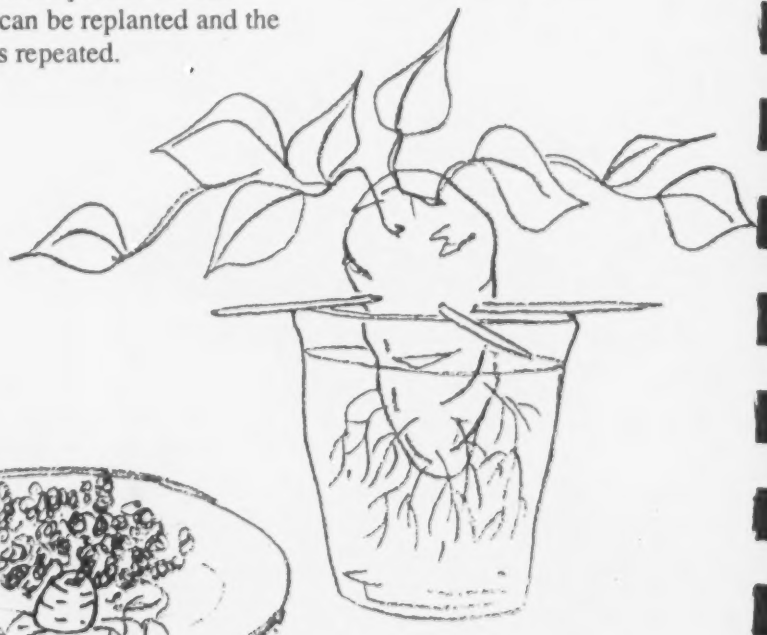
Place a lima bean against the side of a clear drinking glass or jar with a moist paper towel or cotton to hold it in place. Keep moist, but not soaking wet. Your child can see the roots as well as the rest of the bean as it sprouts. This activity may also be done using a plastic sandwich bag. Point out the sequence of how plants grow:

1. First, plant a seed.
2. A small root grows.
3. A small shoot appears.
4. The plant develops leaves and flowers.
5. The flowers produce seeds which can be replanted and the cycle is repeated.

Windowsill Gardens

With some plants (root type), the vegetable itself can start a new plant.

1. Place a sweet potato with the smaller tip submerged in water. Use toothpicks to keep the top of the potato out of the water. In about two weeks or more, there will be the beginning of leaves and roots. Change the water occasionally. Keep adding more water.
2. Cut off about an inch of a carrot or turnip. Put it in a dish of shallow water. (Refill every day.) In about a week, new shoots will start.



"Grow Your Own Beanstalk"			
First Week	Second Week	Third Week	Fourth Week

Grow Your Own Beanstalk

After the lima bean is well rooted, transfer it to a cup of soil. Your child can record the growth of the bean by using a strip of paper once a week to see how much the plant grows. Make a graph of the growth each week and compare the size. Use the graph included.

Cut a strip of paper the length of the plant and paste it on the section marked "First Week." Continue each week and compare the sizes for a four-week period. Your plant may grow taller than the graph.

Rain or Shine

Make a graph about the weather. Is the sun shining or is it raining? Use the attached graph to draw rain or a sun each day. At the end of the week, count and see how many rainy days we had. How many sunny days did we have? Which side of the graph has more? Which has less? Were there the same number of sunny and rainy days this week? This activity will help children to count, compare, and be aware of Spring weather.

Books to Choose From the Library to Read:

What is a Plant? - Carby
The Bug Book - Dugan
Things That Grow - Eggleston
Hamilton Duck's Springtime - Getz
The Carrot Seed - Kraus
Spring is Here - Lenski
Creepy the Caterpillar - Smith
The Growing Story - Kraus
The Flower - Downer
The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring - Clifton
Two Little Gardeners - Brown and Hurd
Bird Talk - Gans

These books will help children to see what happens in the Spring. Books on bugs, plants and animals will show them how things change and grow.

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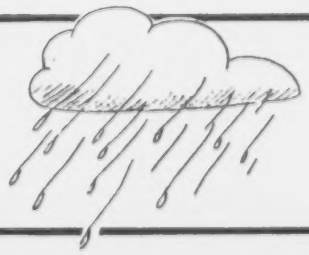
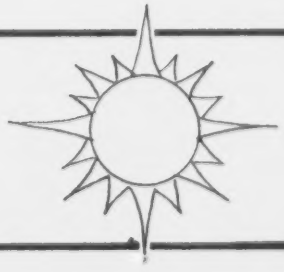
		

Apply and Express

Plant A Garden

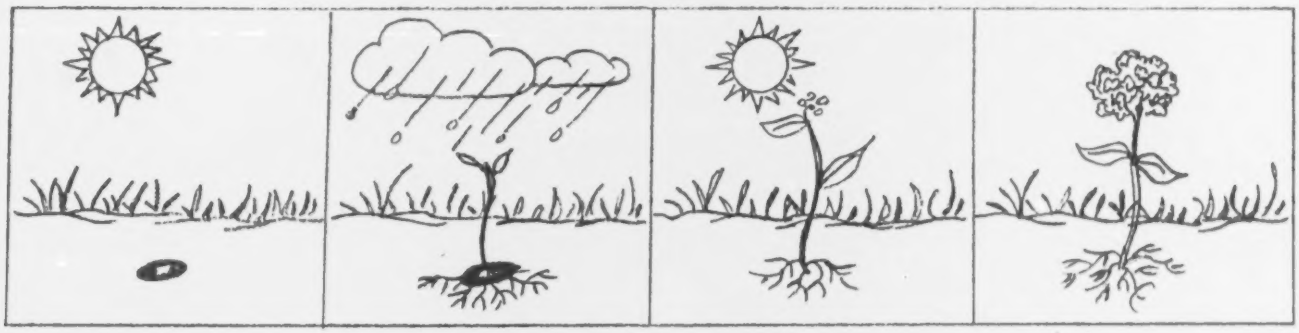
In his own little garden let your child plant seeds outside after it starts to get warm. Show him how to dig up the soil and make little holes to put his seeds in. Some fast-growing seeds to use are zinnias, marigolds, radishes and carrots. Talk about plants needing soil, water and sun to grow. Let him help water and pull up the weeds. He will better understand how plants grow if he is able to grow his own.

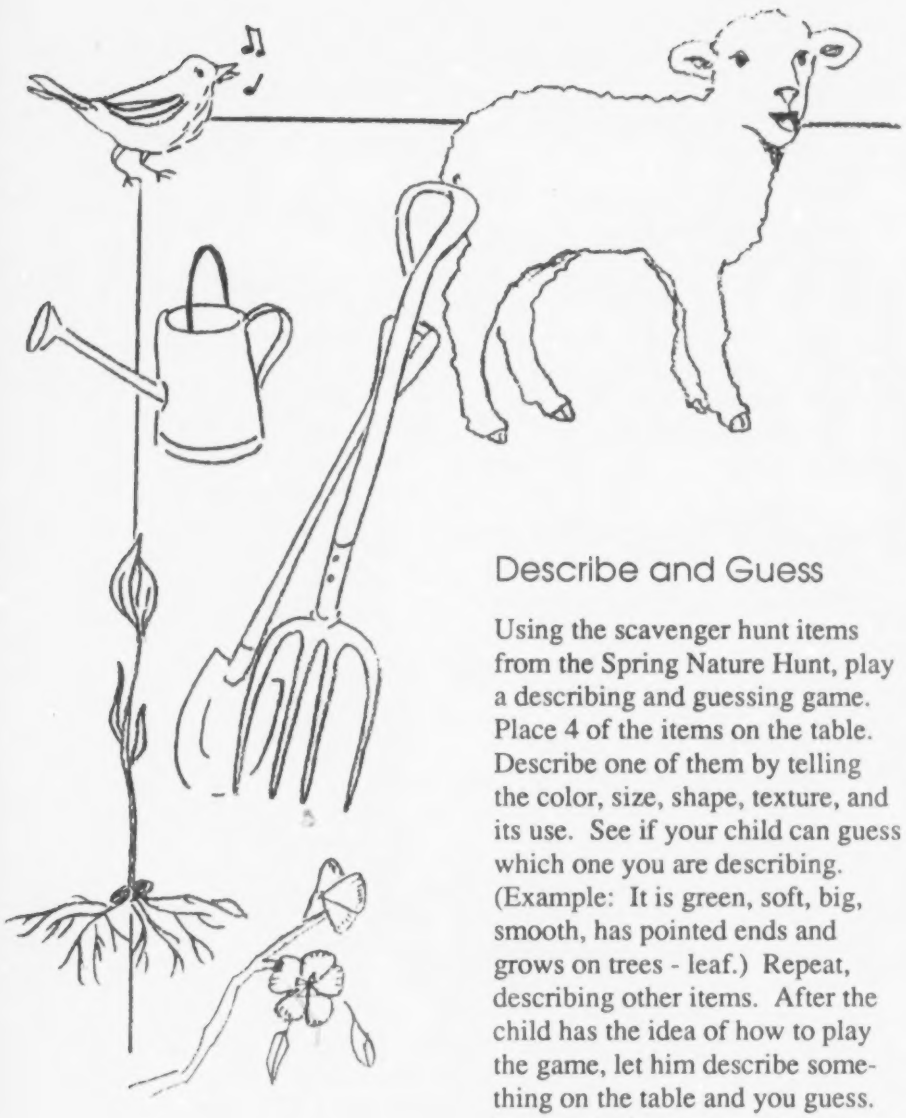
After having the experience of planting a real garden, let your child act out the planting and growing of a seed. Turn the lights off. Let him squat down and pretend that he is the seed that you are planting in the ground. Use a squirt bottle and spray water on him for the rain. Turn on the light for the sun and have him rise (or grow) slowly until he is a full grown plant. This is another way for your child to experience the growing process of a plant.

How Does It Grow?

Talk about the pictures on the sequence strip that is attached. Cut the cards apart. Show him the pictures and describe how a plant grows. First you plant a seed in the soil, then it rains and the plant starts to grow. The sun comes out and the plant grows more. Then a flower will open on the top. Mix up the four pictures and see if your child can put them back in the right order and tell you the story about a plant growing.

Let your child use the four blank cards to draw pictures of his plant growing.





Sense Book

Talk with your child about what he can hear, see, smell, feel and taste during the Spring. Staple five pieces of paper together to form a book. On the top of each page, write the words: See, Hear, Smell, Feel, Taste. Look through magazines and cut out pictures of things for Spring that could be pasted on each page. Your child could also draw his own pictures or glue real objects on the page. Your child learns and needs to experience things with all five of his senses.

Describe and Guess

Using the scavenger hunt items from the Spring Nature Hunt, play a describing and guessing game. Place 4 of the items on the table. Describe one of them by telling the color, size, shape, texture, and its use. See if your child can guess which one you are describing. (Example: It is green, soft, big, smooth, has pointed ends and grows on trees - leaf.) Repeat, describing other items. After the child has the idea of how to play the game, let him describe something on the table and you guess. Put 4 other items out and repeat the game.

Spring Nature Hunt

Gather ten nature items. Examples are feathers, grass, leaves, flowers, rocks, seeds and buds. Talk about your display. Go outside with your child and search from items that match those on display. Can your child find the same things? Bring the items in the house and let your child glue them together on a piece of paper to form a collage for Spring.

Parts of a Plant

While taking a spring walk, stop and look at a plant with your child. Pull one plant out of the ground to show him the roots and talk about why plants have roots. Touch and look at the stem, leaves, petals and seeds. (Roots draw the water and minerals from the soil up into the rest of the plant; stems draw water up to the leaves and petals; leaves make food for the plant; petals attract insects to the plant; seeds are scattered to grow and make new plants).

After your walk, let your child drink from a straw. This will show that a straw and a stem work the same way, drawing water through them.

Let your child paint or draw a picture of the plant, including all of its parts, using paints or crayons. See if he can remember what some of the parts are called.

How Many Do I Have?

Give your child ten each of two different kinds of seeds, such as:

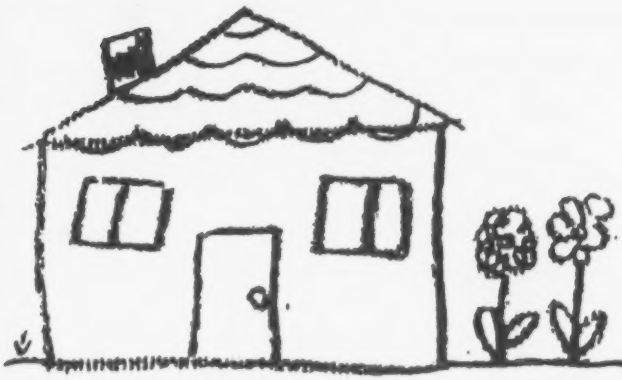
10 lima bean seeds
10 flower seeds

Show your child the numeral 4. After he identifies the numeral, ask him to put beans together in different groupings to equal 4. For example: 2 lima bean seeds and 2 flower seeds.

See if he can make all the combinations for 4:

3 + 1 1 + 3 0 + 4 2 + 2

If 4 is difficult, try 3. If 4 is not difficult, try 5. This will help your child to learn the value of a numeral.



Summer

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

As children and adults spend more and more time inside and in front of the TV, it becomes more important to experience outdoor activities.

We need fresh air and sunshine to grow healthy and strong. Vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin, can't be stored. We need it in our lives.

Many physical fitness experts are becoming concerned about the muscle tone development of children. Because of the many hours spent as "couch potatoes," children are not used to using their muscles. Instead of being actively involved, they are passive observers.

There are so many benefits from rigorous outdoor play:

- It provides a healthy release from the home atmosphere.
- It builds strong muscles and bones.
- It develops stamina and helps children fend off many germs that come their way.
- It enhances creative problem solving, as children get to enjoy all the messy exploring activities that can't always happen in the house.
- It makes us feel better about ourselves when we are able to control our bodies.

Like the parent in the poem, take time to build special memories for your child of the times you played together—outside!

I Took His Hand and Followed

My dishes went unwashed today,
I didn't make the bed,
I took his hand and followed
Where his eager footsteps led.

O yes, we went adventuring,
My little son and I …
Exploring all the great outdoors
Beneath the summer sky.

We waded in a crystal stream,
We wandered through a wood …
My kitchen wasn't swept today
But life was gay and good.

We found a cool, sun-dappled glade
And now my small son knows
How Mother Bunny hides her nest,
Where jack-in-the pulpit grows.

We watched a robin feed her young,
We climbed a sunlit hill …
Saw cloud-sheep scamper through the sky,
We plucked a daffodil.

That my house was neglected,
That I didn't brush the stairs,
In twenty years, no one on earth
Will know, or even care.

But that I've helped my little boy
To noble manhood grow,
In twenty years, the whole wide world
May look and see and know.

Author Unknown

Water Play

Water Play

Children love to play in water and summer is the ideal time to let your child explore with water. By exploring with water, your child can make predictions (how many cups of water will it take to fill the pail?), handle tools and equipment, and use his imagination (pretend cooking).

Give your children the following items to play with in their pool, a wash tub or a bucket of water:

- measuring cup
- muffin tin
- funnel
- sieve
- floatable soap and toys
- plastic pitcher and bowls
- plastic squeeze bottles
- sponges
- egg beater
- eye or medicine dropper or baster

It may be fun to add food coloring to the water when your child is having tea parties.

Footprints

Give your child a tub of water to play with on a hot day. She can step in the pan and then make wet footprints on the sidewalk.

Ask your child to think of how many ways she can make footprints. You may suggest—close together, far apart, like a giant, or in a pattern.

Bubbles

Water and bubbles are a winning combination. Make soap bubbles with liquid dishwashing soap. (Dawn dishwashing detergent works best.) To make the bubbles last longer, add a dash of glycerine. To make the bubbles prettier, add food coloring.

Let your child experiment with the sizes of bubbles. Can he make observations about what he sees as he blows different bubbles? Are soap bubbles always round? Ask your child what he thinks. Then get a piece of wire (a paper clip will work). Bend it square with a little handle. Make a bubble. What happened?

Giant Bubble Blower

Make your own giant bubble blower out of two straws and a piece of string. Shape the two straws and string into a rectangle by threading the string through the straws. Pour bubble mixture into a cookie sheet or tray with edges. Lay straw rectangle on top, then lift and pull to one side. A giant bubble should be created.

Backyard Games

Backyard Games

Children love to play games of any type. The open space of a yard is perfect for a child to develop large muscle skills such as running, climbing and hopping. Games promote:

- balance
- coordination
- body strength
- problem solving
- taking turns
- gain confidence

Call Ball

Use a beach ball or other large ball. Players form a line facing the leader. The leader calls the name of a player and tosses, rolls, or bounces the ball to a named person. The player catches the ball and then returns it to the leader in the same manner.

To enhance your child's targeting skills, he may enjoy the following games.

Outdoor Obstacle Course

Set up an obstacle course in your yard. Have your child discover how many ways he can move through the course. Some examples are:

Tunnel: Crawl through a tunnel made with a large box.

Cross the Mississippi: Place a ladder flat on the ground. Step on each rung of the ladder to cross the river.

Winding Path: Place a hose or rope in a spiral. Walk into center and then out again.

Balance Beam: Place a 2" x 4" on the ground. Have your child walk across it.

Lawn Chairs: Crawl under.

Laundry Basket: Jump over.

Tennis

Inflate a round balloon and tie the end. Attach string to balloon. Tie other end to a clothesline that is hung at player's eye level (between two chairs). Balloon should not touch the ground. Players hit balloon back and forth over the line, using large wooden spoons, hands or paper towel tubes as rackets.

Track and Field Meet

Hold a neighborhood track meet in your yard. Some of the events could be:

Discus Throw: Use a frisbee for discus. Throw discus for distance or at a target for accuracy.

Softball Throw: Throw a softball or tennis ball. Measure for distance.

Broad Jump: Stand on a marker and jump forward. Measure distance.

High Jump: Place broomstick or yardstick about 3 inches from the ground between two blocks. Jump over stick.

Long Distance Run: Run from one spot to designated place and return.

Ball Roll: How many ways can you roll a ball across the grass? (Nose, foot, etc.)

Bike and Big Wheel Race

Golf

Dig a hole in the ground. Hit a Wiffle ball into the hole with a yardstick, plastic baseball bat, or golf club. Instead of a hole in the ground, hit ball into a can that is lying on it's side. Various sized cans can be used.

A-Camping We Will Go

Many people go camping during their vacation. Ask your child, "What do we mean by camping?" (Sleeping outdoors in a tent or camper, cooking food outdoors.) What would we take on a camping trip? (Tent, sleeping bags, food, dishes, cooler, flashlights, backpack, and a fishing pole.)

Explore with your child, ways to set up a campsite. Your child may enjoy using your yard as a campsite to play in. You and your child can set up a tent and several camp stools or chairs.

Tents, Playhouses, Secret Hideouts

Drape a bedsheet or blanket over a card table or a clothesline. If you want to make a fancier house, help your child decorate a sheet with felt-tipped markers; draw windows, a door.

If you have an infant windup swing you no longer need, remove the swing part. The A-frame support system makes a nifty skeleton for a playhouse. Drape fabric over the sides to make a pup-tent type hideaway.

Make a playhouse from a huge cardboard carton (such as those used to ship a refrigerator or stove or other bulky items). Decorate with paints, crayons or markers. Cut out doors and windows.

Nature Hike

Take your child on a nature walk. Your backyard, neighborhood or park make excellent places to explore. Give your child an egg carton for collecting treasures she finds along the way.

If you have one, take along a magnifying glass for observing nature up close. Encourage your child to look for and collect signs of summer and to compare the different flowers, weeds, colors of grasses and leaves.

Campsite Collage

After the nature walk, give your child pieces of cardboard cut into tent shapes.

Let your child glue her collection to her cardboard tent shape. (Be sure to use white glue, not paste, when your child attaches her treasures to the cardboard.)

Trail Mix

Your child may get hungry while walking or camping. As a treat, she may enjoy Trail Mix. To make it:

- Set out bowls of Cherrios, raisins, pretzels, peanuts, dried fruit bits and M & Ms.
- Put a small scoop or large spoon in each bowl.
- Give child a reclosable plastic bag and let her fill her bag with a scoop of goodies from each bowl.
- Then help her seal the bag closed and shake it well.

Trail Snack Necklace

Give your child a long piece of string with a large knot in one end and the other end taped to make a "needle." Let her thread cereal such as Fruit Loops on her piece of string. Suggest that she string the cereal in a pattern. Remind her that a pattern says the same thing over and over (red-yellow-yellow-orange, red-yellow-yellow-orange, etc.).

Rock Sculpture

If your child has collected rocks during your nature walk, she may enjoy making a rock sculpture. Have her sort the rocks by size. Help her discover that if she puts the larger rocks on the bottom, her sculpture will stand up better. Glue the sculpture together.

Sun Visors

Cut a hole in the middle of a large paper plate. Let your child decorate the rim of the paper plate with crayons and felt-tip markers. When he is finished, help your child slip his personally designed sun visor over his head.

Sunglasses

For frames, use two connected plastic rings from six-pack holder of soda cans. Wrap a pipe cleaner around each side of the glasses. Bend pipe cleaners to fit around ears. Use colored cellophane or plastic wrap for lens.

Space

Home Activities

Dear Parents:

When you were young, you may have looked up on a warm summer's night and become aware of the wonder of a star-filled sky. Share that wonder with your own child. As you point out the position of the Big Dipper in the

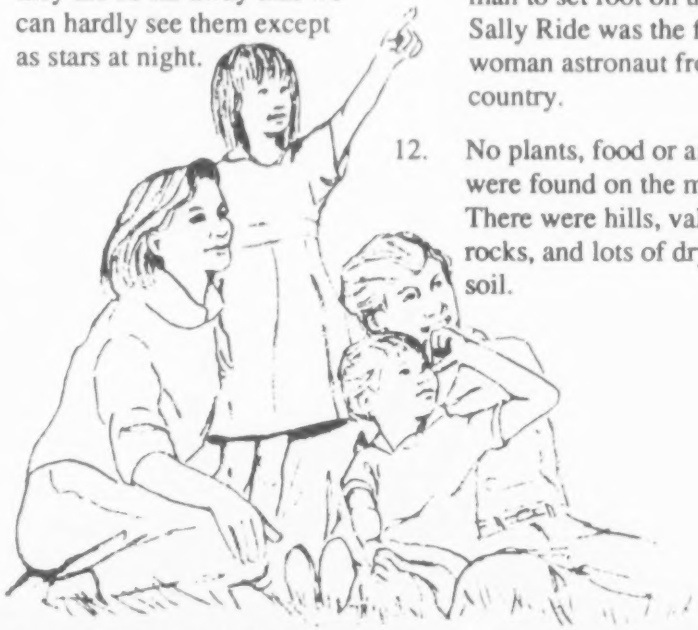
night sky, you may be planting a seed of curiosity that draws your child to the science of space or even to a role of an astronaut.

Many courageous men and women in our country have worked to expand our frontier in space. All children need good role models. The space scientists and astronauts stand for courage, initiative and curiosity—all traits we would like to spark in our children.

By learning about man's adventures in space, children are becoming aware of a whole new world. We can foster this sense of wonder about the universe and help them understand that many questions about space are still unanswered. They may help to find some of the answers in their own lifetimes.

Space Facts to Share With Your Child:

1. We live on a planet called "Earth."
2. The earth is shaped like a great big ball.
3. The earth spins around the sun. Its path is called an orbit.
4. There are eight other planets that go around the sun. They are Venus, Mercury, Mars, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Jupiter and Pluto.
5. Some stars are really as big or bigger than the sun, but they are so far away that we can hardly see them except as stars at night.
6. It is very dark and cold in outer space.
7. We call space travellers "Astronauts."
8. When astronauts go into outer space, they must wear special space suits to protect them in the space environment.
9. Footprints left on the moon stay "forever" because there are no wind or climate changes to take them away.
10. Rockets are used to fire spaceships into space.
11. Neil Armstrong, an American astronaut, was the first man to set foot on the moon. Sally Ride was the first woman astronaut from our country.
12. No plants, food or animals were found on the moon. There were hills, valleys, rocks, and lots of dry, gray soil.



Explore and Discover

Plan a Space Meal

Talk with your child about the kinds of food that astronauts take into outer space. Tell them that to save storage space and to keep down the space shuttle's weight, they must take a lot of dried food on space flights. Because of a lack of gravity, astronauts must eat many foods from squeeze bags or the food will float around the ship. It would be fun to plan and prepare a snack or even a whole meal for the family that consists of dried foods. Your child can help you look for such foods as instant potatoes, dry cereal or Tang when you go to the grocery store. You and your child may also work in the kitchen together to prepare one of the following snacks:

Fruit Leather

2 cups fully ripe fruit (cherries, peaches, apples or other fruit your child likes)

2 tbsp. honey or sugar

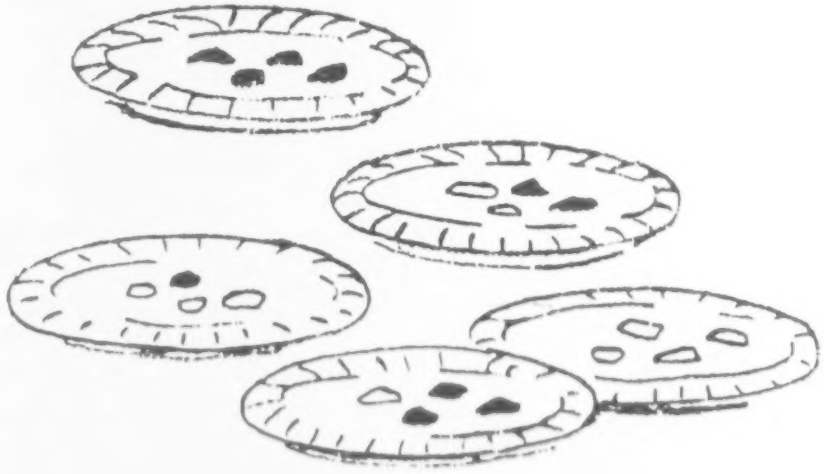
Wash fruit but do not peel. Cut in large chunks and place in blender. Add honey or sugar and blend 15 seconds. Cover a baking sheet with plastic wrap. Pour the fruit mixture onto the sheet. Spread evenly with a spoon to about 1/8" thickness. Put the baking sheet in 150 degree oven for about 3 hours. If it's a hot, dry day, you may set the baking sheet in direct sun for 10-12 hours. When the mixture is firm and not sticky to touch, you and your child can cut it (with a plastic knife) into various shapes he is learning—triangles, rectangles, etc. Roll up and store in airtight container.

Space Pudding

Make instant pudding with your child following the directions on the package. Allow him to help you as much as possible. He will be interested in watching the wet and dry ingredients combine. Place 2 or 3 spoonfuls of prepared pudding in a small Ziploc bag for your child. Snip a corner of the bag so he may squeeze the pudding into his mouth and pretend to be an astronaut.

Space Rocks

Children like to collect things just as the astronauts do when they make space explorations. Your child can collect his own "space rocks" outdoors to use for making number combinations. When she has gathered 30 rocks that are two different colors (15 white and 15 brown), she will be ready to group them together. You will set out the planets. (Use about 5 paper plates.) Give your child a number to work with. It's best to start with 4 or 5. How many ways can you make the number 4? (2 white rocks and 2 brown rocks, 3 white rocks and 1 brown rock, etc.). Describe what your child is doing as she works. (Four and one make five.)



Space Helmets

As children are naturally curious about outer space, so are they curious about the equipment that astronauts wear and take on their flights. Help your child find "props" that will encourage dramatic play as an astronaut. Such things might include toy walkie-talkies, a backpack, large boots or mess kits. Your child might also enjoy having a space helmet that the two of you can make together. Here's how:

1. Using sharp scissors, cut the space helmet from a plastic milk jug in the shape shown in the illustration. This should be done by an adult.

2. Your child may decorate his helmet with a variety of objects such as colored plastic wrap (to go across eyes), a pipe cleaner (to be used as mouthpiece), bits of styrofoam, stickers, etc. Some will need to be secured with white glue. When the glue is dry, your young astronaut will be ready to explore the far reaches of the galaxy.

Moon Craters

When you have a chance to observe the moon in the night sky, point out to your child that we can actually see its rough surface with our eyes. Introduce the word "craters." A crater is an indentation on the surface caused by meteors and space debris hitting the moon. Your child may want to represent the surface of the moon by making his own moon craters and mountains.

Make some cornmeal dough with the following recipe:

1-1/2 cups flour

1-1/2 cups cornmeal

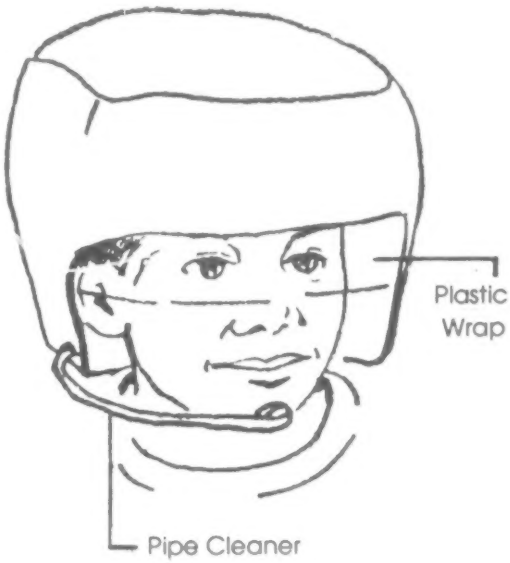
1 cup salt

1 cup water

food coloring

1. Help your child measure and mix the ingredients together.
2. Add more water to make the mixture cling.
3. Add a few drops of food coloring to the mixture.

Spread the dough on a paper plate. Your child may then press objects such as marbles, beans or rocks into the dough or even use his thumb to make "craters" on the moon.



Listen and Understand

Rocket Ship Blast-Off

It may be fun for you and your child to work together in making your own plan for building a rocket ship. Does your child know what a rocket ship looks like? What parts are on it? You may want to look through books from the library or plan a trip to a local space center to do your "research."

Help your child think about all the possible materials she might use to build the rocket ship: cardboard tubes, styrofoam pieces, tape, glue, wire, pipe cleaners, construction paper and paint. (If you do not have these materials readily available, your child could make a plan using Legos or other building blocks. Then she could construct her rocket ship.)

Now we need some planets. Planets can be made from different colors of construction paper. Your child might like to draw some things on them representing what she thinks might be on the planets. Put the construction paper planets on the floor. Now let's go on a planet walk. To make the walk more exciting, you can rubber band some soft sponges or leftover carpet pad onto the shoes of your young astronaut.

Here comes the blast-off. Your child can take his rocket ship to the planets. Give directions such as: make your rocket ship go between the red and blue planet; make your rocket ship land on the green planet; make your rocket ship go beside the yellow planet. Use the position words your child has learned.

Jet Propulsion

A rocket is a device that is driven by a stream of hot gases. You can do a simple chemical reaction experiment that will create the gas to make a balloon blow up.

Put about 1" of vinegar into a clear, small-necked bottle. (The vinegar bottle itself would work.) Stretch out the neck of a balloon and have your child put 2 teaspoons of baking soda into the balloon. Put the balloon over the neck of the bottle. Shake the baking soda out of the balloon into the vinegar. Observe what is happening in the bottle and to the balloon.

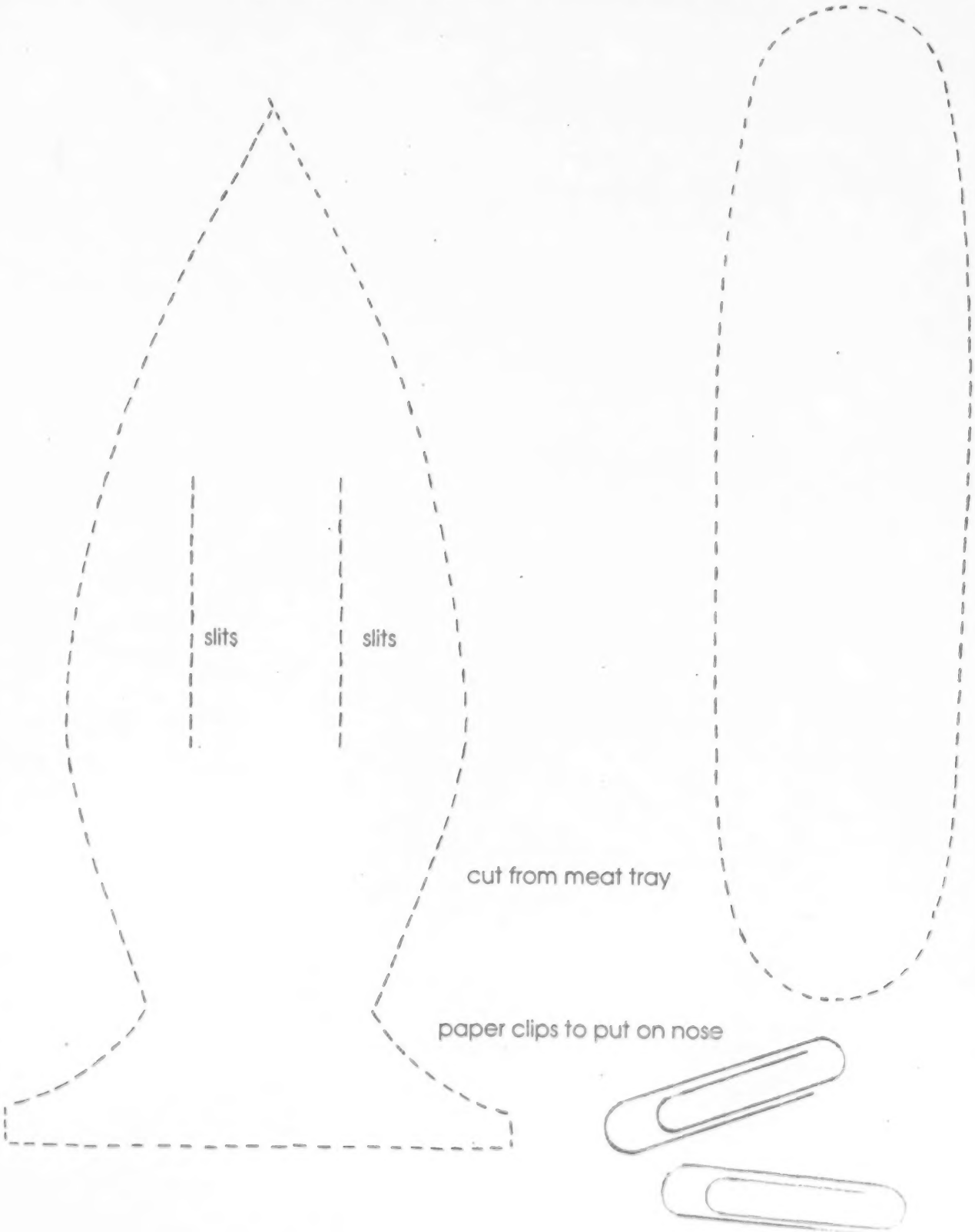
You can try it again by adding more baking soda and vinegar. Did the balloon stay up longer? Did it travel farther? Take the balloon off the bottle and let it go.

Gravity

The concept of gravity is a hard one for young children to understand but you can talk about "What goes up in the air,must come down to the earth." You can give your child lots of experiences with this idea by:

- Taking him to a playground and as he swings tell him how leg power pushed him off the earth but gravity pulled him back.
- Leg power gets you to the top of the slide and gravity pulls you back to Earth.
- Telling him to jump across the room and then walk. Which was easier? It's hard to stay up in the air with a jump. Gravity pulls you back.
- Tell them vehicles like airplanes and helicopters and spaceships need powerful motors to push them away from the earth.
- Can your child think of a way he can stay up in the air against gravity? Write down his or her answer.

Space Shuttle Glider



A Trip to the Moon—A Memory Game for the Family to Play

Let's pretend to go to the moon. What will we take with us? Let one person start and say, "I'm going to the moon, we will take a red hat, (add one new item) and a kitten." The next person would say for the trip to the moon, "We will take a red hat, a kitten, and a big marble."

Most young children will easily remember 4 or 5 items. This game will develop your child's memory for what he hears. If he is having difficulty, play the game with objects that he can see and touch to help him remember.

My Space Story—Listening to Your Child's Feelings

Now that your child has taken a pretend trip to outer space, she can draw a picture of the kinds of things she thinks are in space. After your child has drawn her picture, you can write down what she says about the picture. Some children have some scary feelings of outer space because of what they have seen or heard. This is a good opportunity for you to listen to your child and to talk to her about her feelings.

Solar System Fingerplays and Songs

Planet Song (Sung to the tune of "Thumbkin")

Where is Earth?
Where is Earth?

Where are you going?
Where are you going?

Other verses:

Where is Pluto? and so forth, naming other planets

Five Little Astronauts

Five little astronauts ready for outer space.
The first one said, "Let's have a race."
The second one said, "The weather's too rough."
The third one said, "Oh, don't be gruff."
The fourth one said, "I'm ready enough."
The fifth one said, "Let's blast off!"
10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (slowly squat down)
Blast Off! (Jump up.)

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle little star.
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle little star.
How I wonder what you are.

After you sing this song with your child, try other ways of singing it. "Let's sing it as if we are very sad and crying"—other variations: very happy and laughing, quickly, slowly, high voice, low voice.

Satellite Communication

Discuss with your child things which he might know that are in the sky (clouds, sun, moon, stars). There is something else in the sky that men have put up there also. It is called a satellite. A satellite sends messages back to earth.

You will need three people to make a pretend satellite system. One person will hold the end of a string and pretend to be an *earth sender*. A second person will hold the middle of the string and be the *satellite*. The third person will hold the other end of the string and be the *earth receiver*. Take an object and put it into a bag (a hole in the upper part of the bag will let the bag slide to the satellite). The *earth sender* states the message and sends the bag. The satellite will look at what is in the bag and tell everyone what it is and then send it to the earth receiver. This is the way many of the television programs are brought to us through a satellite.

When your child is interested in trying to write down his own ideas, he may want to send a written message using pretend writing. Don't worry about the printing. Your child will know the content of his message.

Apply and Express

Space Shuttle Glider

To demonstrate the lifting effect of simple wings, your child can make a space shuttle glider from a styrofoam plate or meat tray. Use the pattern included to cut out the parts. (Parent needs to do this.) Your child can smooth the edges with an emery board. He may also want to decorate his craft with markers. Your child can help you glue the top of the shuttle to the wings. Make sure the body of the shuttle dries straight for a straight, level flight. Your glider will need a nose weight. You can use modeling clay, paper clips, or any other material that you and your child think will give it weight.

Your child is now ready to launch his space shuttle glider. Try it out. Do any adjustments need to be made?

See how far he can make his glider travel. When it lands, show him how to measure the distance with his feet by placing his heel in front of his other foot. How many of his foot lengths did it travel? How many of your foot lengths?

Balloon Blast-Off

Several people in your family can have a balloon blast-off. Let each person blow up a different colored balloon.

What is inside your balloon?
What will happen if we let go of the balloon?
Where do you think it will land?
Now, ready to launch the balloons.
5-4-3-2-1 Blast Off!

Everyone can tell where his or her balloon landed by using words such as near or far.

John's balloon landed near Mary's balloon.

Dad's balloon landed near the TV.

Mom's balloon landed far away from the door.

Can your child tell you which balloon is far away, farther away, farthest away?

Creative Movement in Space

- Acting out or representing movement with our bodies is another way to learn and retain that learning. Help your child pretend he is a rocket ship ready to blast off. Give the count-down 9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 as he squats, then pushes off to jump up.
- Pretend you're inside the spaceship where there is no gravity. Gently float around the room softly bumping into things.
- Pretend you're the earth spinning round and round.
- Pretend you're walking in the dust of the moon taking giant steps because there is no gravity.

Interview an Astronaut

To encourage pretend writing and questioning skills, talk with your child about how newspaper reporters "interview" people, such as astronauts, after they do important things. The reporter asks the person questions to find out what he did and writes down the responses.

If you take the role of the reporter first, you can ask your young astronaut questions about his journey. "What did you see on your trip?" "What did you eat?" "How did you feel inside the rocket ship?" "Where did you go?"

Write down your child's answers on your pad of paper.

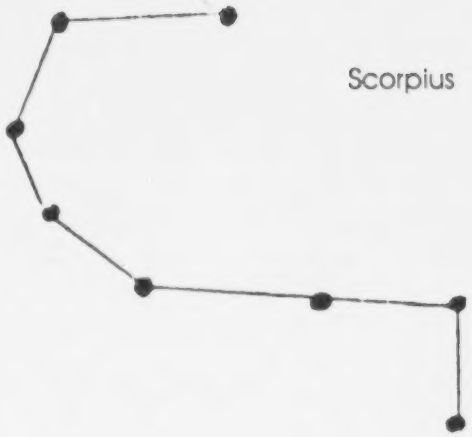
Now change roles. Let your child interview you with questions of his own choice. He can write your answers in his "pretend writing."

Star Gazer

Looking up into the sky at night, you can observe with your child the different stars. Explain to your child that the stars make patterns in the sky and these are called constellations.

After observing some of the stars and constellations, you can help your child make a Star Gazer. Use a 4 x 4 inch piece of black paper and put it around a toilet-tissue tube with a rubber band. Now your child can take a push-pin and make a design on the black construction paper. Hold the tube up to the light and look through the tube to see how the light shines through. He has made his own pretend constellation.

You could make several Star Gazers, punching holes in various shapes: heart, triangle, flower. After your child looks through the tube, he can draw what he sees.



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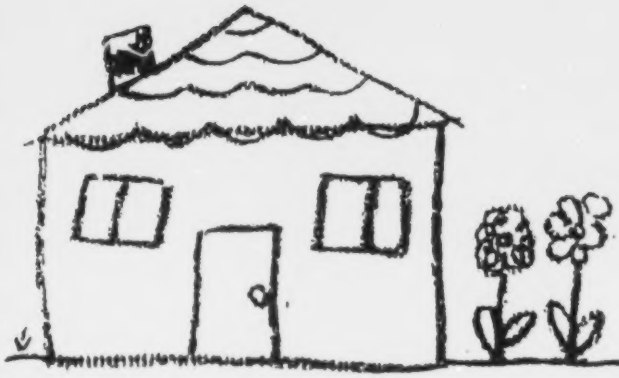


Story Time

Home Activities

Dear Parents,

A story opens a window in a child's mind. Through that window flows the magic of images, of pictures that the storyteller creates with his voice.

Children of all ages are "caught up" by the magic of stories.

You, too, can be a storyteller and a creator of magic for your child.

When you are going to tell a story, you can make up your own story; you can retell a story from one of your favorite books; or you can make up a story about your everyday experiences. Many times, customs in the family are handed down from one generation to another through the art of storytelling.

Small children love to hear their favorite stories over and over again. Try to make your stories interesting enough to hold your child's interest while you are building up his or her imagination. As a storyteller, you can change the stories and they can easily be shortened or lengthened. Pick stories that have phrases your child can repeat and that have movements for your child to act out.

Just listening to stories, thinking about them, and discussing them together, will improve your child's understanding and ability to use his language skills.

Be as dramatic as possible. You may want to vary the loudness or softness of your voice. Your voice can be used high or low, depending on the situation and the character speaking. Use gestures and facial exaggerations to help illustrate your tale. Children love when storytellers cackle or scream, whisper, snore or weep.

As you tell stories and as your child listens to you use your voice in many ways, he will begin to develop a rich background for acting out and telling his own stories. He will be able to enter into a world of fantasy play more fully.

A playing child is able to create, make choices and learn control. Playing with others gives a child the opportunity to use language, to express needs, to communicate differences and to express emotions. Adults play an important role in their child's pretend play. When you take your cues from children and enter their pretend play themes, you can facilitate language growth.

Children learn best when they are given the opportunity to discover, dream, imagine and express their original ideas.

Explore and Discover

Simple props will spark a lot of fantasy play. A fantasy kit with all the trimmings will make a super gift for your child.

Barber/Beautician Kit

Into a box put the following items:

- brush
- comb
- curlers
- shaving brush
- towel (to cover customer)
- old shirt for a uniform
- a scissors

With this equipment, your beautician can go to work on all of her dolls and stuffed animals. She may even be able to entice a few family members or friends to sit still for a hair roll-up.

TV/Reporter

Give your child a chance to report on the important goings-on in his life with some of these props:

- microphone (made from a paper tube with rolled-up socks)
- camera (made from a box with a toilet paper roll for a lens)
- tie or scarf
- cereal boxes (to do commercials)
- note pad
- pencils

Gather these materials and put them into a box and label it "TV/Reporter."

Post Office Kit

- gummed labels or stamps from advertisements for buying magazines
- envelopes
- old mail advertisements and magazines
- grocery bags and tape (to make packages)
- stamp pad and rubber stamp
- shoulder bag (for carrying mail to be delivered)
- if you have a small scale, the children can use it to weigh the letters

Gather these materials and put them into a box labeled, "Post Office Kit." Whenever your child wants to play post office, the materials will be ready. Play along with your child, responding to his words and actions.

Carpenter's Box

- apron with pockets
- ruler
- tools
- empty paint cans and brushes
- sandpaper
- old scraps of wood
- hammer
- nails
- pencils or magic markers

You will need to supervise this activity so that your child will not get hurt using the tools, but let your child use his own imagination to come up with ways of playing with these materials. This will encourage his creativity.

Doctor's Office

- pictures or photos of doctors and nurses
- white shirts for uniforms
- nurse's hat (you can make this from white construction paper)
- bandaids
- gauze
- tape
- tongue depressors
- small suitcase or purse for doctor's bag
- stethoscope
- plastic syringes with needles removed

The outdoors is a great place for your child to use his imagination and to set up some dramatic play areas.

Pretend Car Wash and Gas Station

You can help your child set up an outdoor car wash for the trikes and wagons. Provide a hose with a nozzle and lots of rags for wiping and pretend waxing. Some appropriate tools for scrubbing would be scrub brushes, tooth brushes, washrags and squirt bottles.

You could also set up a pretend service station by using an air pump, boxes for gas pumps, watering can or oil cans (empty). The children can bring their cars and trucks to be checked and fixed. They can take turns being customers or mechanics at the station.

To enhance this area you could make a street sign. Use a coffee can and put rocks in it to weigh it down so it doesn't tip over easily. Use a yardstick with a sign attached to it so that the young drivers will know if it is a stop sign or a yield sign. Make several different traffic signs and your child will be experiencing some pre-reading skills.

Lemonade Stand

A favorite for many children is to make a lemonade stand.

Use the Public Libraries

Children should be encouraged to attend story hours at the public library in their area.

Listen and Understand

Bear's Bushy Tail

This is an American Indian tale that you can tell your child.

Repeating lines in a story helps your child participate in the story and focuses his attention and enjoyment.

Tell your child he will repeat the line: "I'm so hungry I could eat ten fish." You may have him say the lines in a gruff "bear" voice.

Once upon a time, Bear had a long, bushy tail like Fox or Squirrel. One winter, Bear woke up early from his long winter's nap. He was very, very hungry. The earth was still covered with snow, and Bear had a hard time finding food. He walked a little farther and saw an eagle eating a fish in a tree. "My that looks good," said Bear. "I'm so hungry I could eat ten fish."

He went into the woods and saw a raccoon eating a fish. Bear said, "I'm so hungry I could eat ten fish."

He walked down to the river where he saw a fox eating a fish. "Mmm, that looks good," said Bear. "How did you catch your fish, the river is all frozen over? You know, I'm so hungry that I could eat ten fish."

"Oh, it was easy," said Fox. "I went out to the middle of the lake, made a small hole in the ice, then stuck my tail down into the water. When I felt a pinch, I knew it was a fish biting, so I pulled out my tail and there was my fish. If you want more fish, just leave your tail in longer."

Bear said, "Thank you, I'm so hungry that I could eat ten fish." Bear was delighted with the thought of a fish dinner. He thanked Fox and went out on the ice and made a small hole. He stuck down his beautiful long tail. Soon he felt something pinch his tail. "Oh, I've caught a fish," said Bear. "I'm so hungry, I could eat ten fish."

Finally, Bear decided he had caught enough fish and started to pull out his tail. His tail would not budge. Bear look back over his shoulder and saw his tail frozen in the ice. "Oh no," cried Bear, "Fox tricked me. The pinching I felt was not fish, it was the ice."

Bear pulled and pulled until finally he broke away from the ice. All he had left of his bushy tail was a short stump. And that is why bears no longer have long, beautiful tails.

Before and After

Show your child a picture from the book *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. An example would be where Goldilocks broke the chair of Baby Bear. Ask your child what has happened and what will happen next. (Any picture of people or animals can be used for this concept.) Ask your child to think about what might have occurred or what could happen to the people or the animals.

Using A Tape Recorder

If you have a tape recorder, you can record some of your child's favorite stories. Your child might like to record some of his stories. He could hear his own story and act it out, or he could draw a picture to go with his story.

The Unfinished Story

You can start a story and let your child finish it:

"Mr. Happy Bear lives in Happyland. Everyone and everything in Happyland is round and jolly. One day, Mr. Happy Bear finds a small hole in a dark, dark cave. Curiously, he crawls inside. He finds the one person in Happyland Cave who is not happy—Mr. Sad Bear. Mr. Happy Bear wants to help Mr. Sad Bear…

If you want your child to continue, you might have to stop and say, "What happened next?" or you may have to ask a few more questions to get the story re-started. "What did Happy Bear say to Sad Bear?" "What would make you happy?" "Do you think that would cheer up Sad Bear?"

A Favorite Story

Stop and Tell

Children have many favorite stories they ask their parents to tell over and over. Before long, they know these stories by heart. When telling a story, give your child a chance to participate by stopping before the most familiar line to let him supply the line. In the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, after you say the line, "Papa Bear said, 'Who's been eating my porridge?'; then Mama Bear said, (let your child supply the line—'Who's been eating my porridge?')." You can stop more and more frequently in a story if your child knows the next line. Eventually, he may be telling you practically all of the story.

Sharing

Sharing your own enjoyment of the story is important. Read phrases that particularly show the power of language.

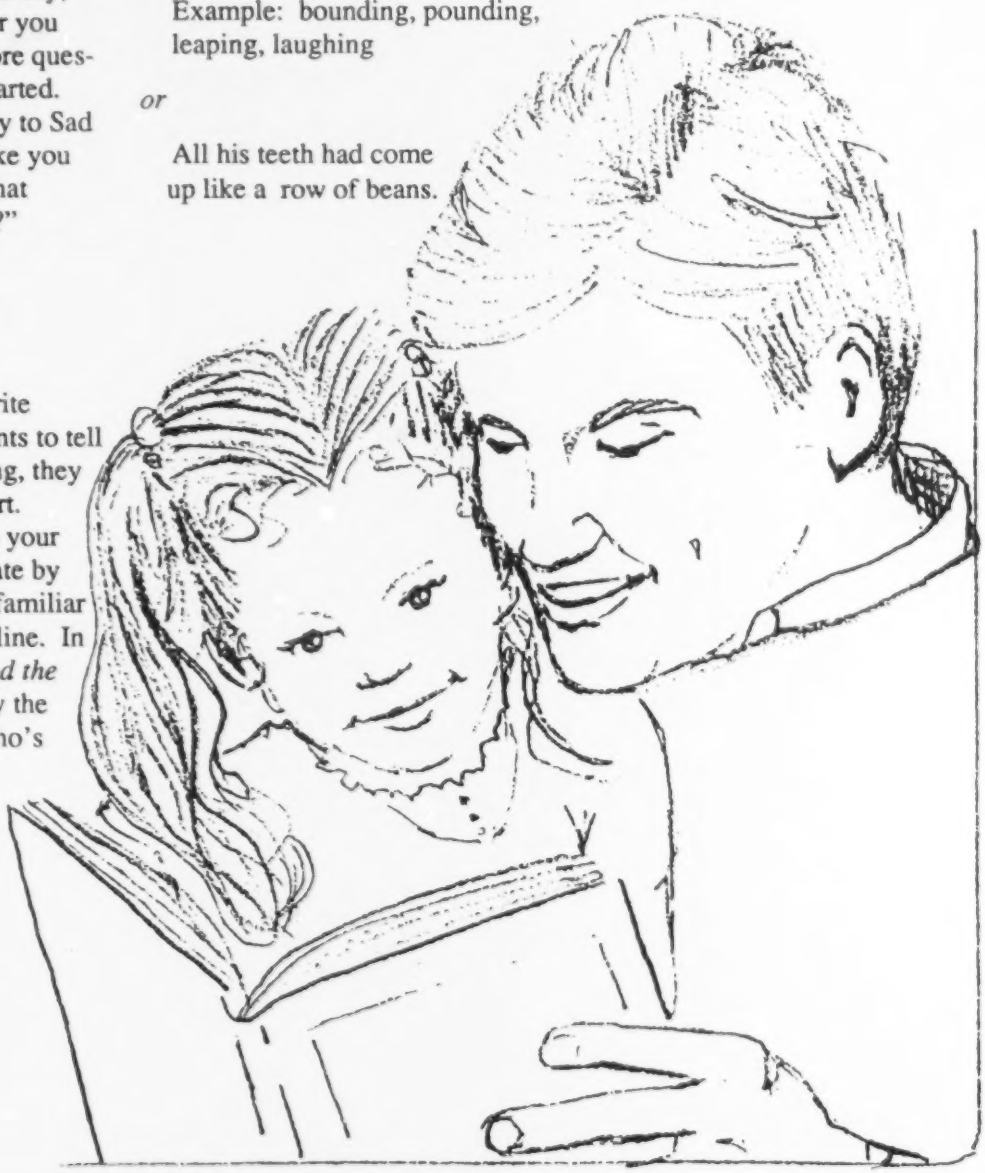
Example: bounding, pounding, leaping, laughing

or

All his teeth had come up like a row of beans.

You may also re-read a funny part so that both you and your child may share the humor or talk about your favorite character.

At times, you may read the story by telling a story about the pictures. Father may tell about one picture and the child tells what is happening in the next picture.



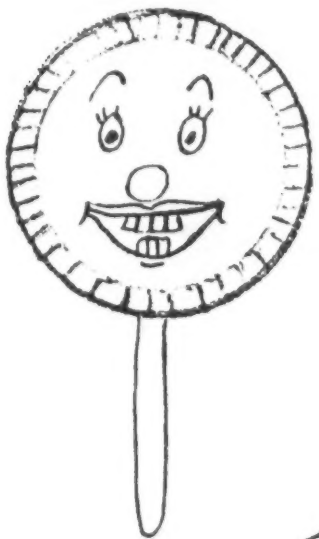
Apply and Express

Stuck On A Bus

Have you ever been stuck on a bus, in a waiting room, or anywhere with your child? Just pull out a pen and draw an instant hand puppet, or draw a whole cast of characters on you or your child's fingers. Tell stories; hold make believe conversations; put on a whole show. (Borrow the plot from any familiar tale, if you wish.)

Paper Plate Puppet

Use any size paper plate and tape a tongue depressor or popsicle stick to it. Your child can draw a face on it or paste junk material on for a face. Add tissue or yarn hair.



Finger Puppet

Cut a puppet out of cardboard or stiff paper and cut finger-sized holes in the bottom (where legs would be). When you put this puppet on, your fingers serve as its legs. Use these puppets for creative play.

Flashlight Puppet

Draw a face on a small paper bag; then, using a rubber band, attach the bag over the end of a flashlight. This makes a terrific nighttime puppet. He glows in the dark. You may ask. What's your puppet's name? Can you tell a story with your puppet?

Because children are so familiar with the story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," it's a perfect story to act out and pretend. The extending of the story into a play helps children learn to put themselves in another place and to think from another point of view. This is a valuable experience for young children who are centered only on their own needs.

Goldilocks' Restaurant

These are some of the materials you and your child can gather to set up a pretend restaurant:

- 3 sizes of cups (small, medium, large)
- 3 sizes of hamburgers made out of brown construction paper
- 3 sizes of buns made out of yellow construction paper
- french fries made from yellow sponges or construction paper, cut into rectangular strips
- cash register or old box for money
- pennies
- paper bags (you could save your McDonald's bags); put numerals 1-5 on the bags (that is the number of fries to go into each bag)
- boxes from McDonald's hamburgers or cheeseburgers

Give your child a chance to explore these materials. You could order a meal and see if your child can remember what you ordered. Remember to order one or two things to start out and gradually increase the number of items that you are ordering. Let the child tell you how many pennies your meal will cost. Then your child can order a meal and you can fix it for her.

You can pretend that this is Goldilocks' Restaurant and that Papa Bear would like a meal. What kind of meal will Papa Bear like? (See if they might say a large hamburger and a large drink.) Let them experiment with fixing meals for Baby Bear and Mama Bear. What kind of meal would each of them like?

To extend this activity, you could cut out of construction paper:

pieces of cheese
pickles
tomatoes
onions
lettuce

When someone is ordering a hamburger, your child will have practice in remembering what someone wanted on their hamburger.

Poem For Goldilocks' Restaurant

This little hamburger has ketchup.
(hold up thumb)
This little hamburger has none.
(hold up index finger)
This little hamburger has pickles.
(hold up middle finger)
And this little hamburger has cheese.
(hold up ring finger)
But this little hamburger has everything
And that's for me please!
(move little finger toward mouth)

Acting out the story of the Three Bears with your family

After you have told your child the story of the Three Bears, you and your child can gather the following materials for a family play:

- a panty hose wig for Goldilocks (see activity in Apply and Express)
- a bib or napkin to be tied around the neck for the Baby Bear
- a necktie for Papa Bear
- a small towel for Baby Bear's bed
- a medium towel for Mama Bear
- a large towel for Papa Bear
- a small bowl
- a medium bowl
- a large bowl

If you have a small bowl, you might tell your child that we need a medium-size bowl for the play and see if he can find one.

- a small spoon
- a medium spoon
- a large spoon
- a small chair
- a medium chair
- a large chair

The children can discuss and identify these materials. They can tell you how they will be using them when they are acting out the story.

They can count the number of bowls, spoons, etc. You can discuss the sizes: small, medium, large. Let your child sequence the objects from the smallest to the largest (smallest bowl to the largest bowl).

A Storytelling Game

You will need a paper bag and some small objects—a toy car, an animal or person, crayon, plastic food and other items.

Each person takes an object out of the bag and makes up a story line. The next person takes an object from the bag and continues the story by adding another story line Continue with all the members of your family until everyone has had at least one turn drawing an object from the bag.

Magic Bag

Pretend you are dragging in a big sack or bag. Tell your child you're going to open it and bring out something that was in the story you just read. Use a familiar story at first. If you just told the story of "Little Riding Hood," you might bring out the cape she wears and pretend to put it on. Your child has to guess what you are doing.

Or you might act out carrying the basket of goodies. After you model the game for a while, let your child take a turn in acting out the story.

Stories To Tell Your Children

The Three Billy Goats Gruff
Jack and the Beanstalk
Lazy Jack
Three Little Pigs
There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly
The Very Hungry Caterpillar
Little Red Riding Hood
The Three Little Kittens
Gingerbread Man
Snow White
Cinderella
Little Red Hen

These tales seem to hold a special fascination for the young child. Maybe that's because in so many of these stories, the hero or heroine is the smallest, youngest, simplest character.

Skills that are to be developed in story time and play fantasy

- uses objects to show relative position of a thing in a variety of ways, such as over, under, behind, in front of, between, through, beside, middle, in, out, up, down, close and far
- makes judgments of same, more than, and less than about collections of objects
- associates a numeral with a given set of objects 0-5; 6-10
- listens to others express ideas, experiences and feelings
- sequences experiences and events
- responds to literacy experiences (enjoys pre-reading and pre-writing activities)
- remembers what he hears; distinguishes sounds around him; words and thoughts and patterns of language
- represents ideas, experiences and feelings with increasing clarity and detail (verbal and written experience stories, art, motor and dramatic play)
- interacts verbally with others
- responds to "How many ways?"

Mind Pictures

The ability to paint a picture in your child's mind with the words you read is called visual imagery. As you read to your child, stop and ask, "What part of the story could you see in your head?" "What did it look like?" "What did Goldilocks look like?" "What was she wearing?"

Clay Figures

After you and the children have told a story such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, have the children mold these animals out of clay. You can bake them in a low oven at 200° or leave them out overnight to harden. These figures may be used to recreate the story or just act out new experiences. Children may enjoy making cardboard houses, wooden furniture, clay dishes, rag clothes and blankets for their new-found "friends."

You could use the clay characters to help the children learn the concepts of these words:

Over	Between	In
Under	Through	Out
Behind	Beside	Up
In front of	Middle	Down
	Close	
	Far	

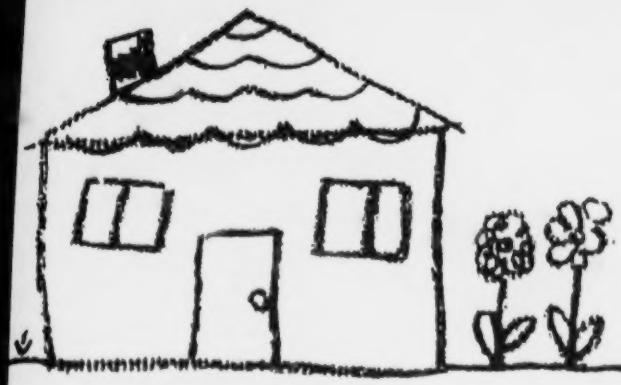
Pantyhose Wig

What you need is a pair of old, clean panty hose and a pair of scissors.

What you do is:

1. cut the feet off the pantyhose
2. cut each leg into three strips
3. braid the strips on each leg
4. instant long hair (Goldilocks, etc.)

What other kinds of wigs can you make?



Little Creek

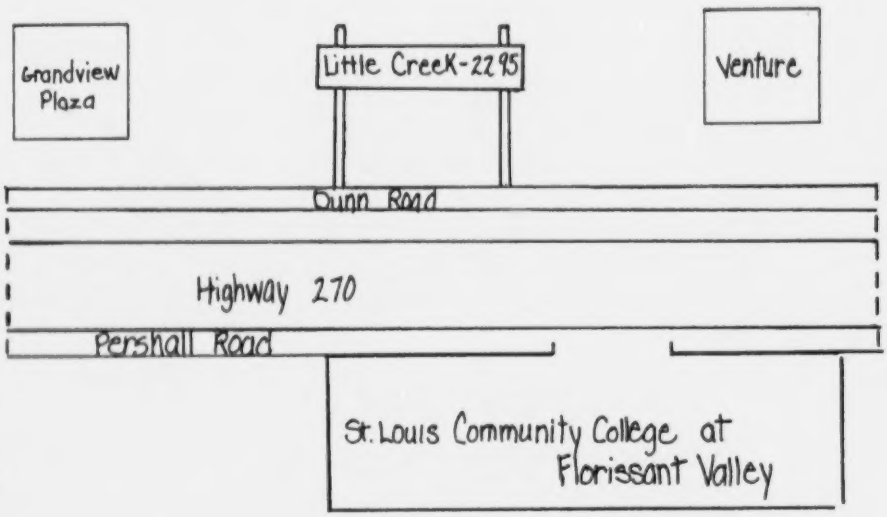
Home Activities

LITTLE CREEK NATURE AREA

Dear Parent Teachers:

In our school district, we are fortunate in having the Little Creek Nature Area as a special resource.

Little Creek is located at 2295 Dunn Road between Grandview Shopping Center and the Venture store.



Little Creek consists of 97 acres of woods and trails, a small creek and pond, a meadow area, a barnyard with a variety of animals, a small museum, a 100-year-old log cabin, a Mississippian Indian hut and a biology classroom for high school students.

Here is some general information about the different environments at Little Creek that you will be able to share with your child. Please be sure to take nothing from Little Creek. Examine things where you find them and put them back. Do not litter. In addition, it is helpful to carry a small glass jar, flashlight and a magnifying glass.

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Barn Area

When you enter the barnyard area at Little Creek, you will see goats, sheep, chickens, turkeys and rabbits. Wild barn swallows swoop in and out of the barn with loads of mud in their beaks. Look up at the rafters in the barn and you will see the mud nests they are building.

As you walk into the barn, touch the fur of the animals, especially the goat and sheep, and ask your child to tell you if the fur feels the same or different. Which is softer? (Sheep's fur is called wool and is used to make clothing.) If there are any baby animals, call your child's attention to the way they look. How do they eat. When the large goat, Pierre, is outside, look at the pupil of his eye. What shape is it? (It will be a black rectangle.) Ask your child how your eye is different from Pierre's.

Talk with your child about how the animals are alike and different. How are a goat and sheep alike? (four legs, fur, eat hay, etc.). How are they different? (One is big, the other small; different colors, different kind of fur.)

Continue this process with other animals that you see.

Along the southern edge of the barnyard fence are the bird pens. (Birds are covered with feathers.) One pen contains waterfowl. Ask your child to look at the feet and beaks of the ducks. How are they different from the chickens in the next pen?

- The fluffy chicken with a top-knot of feathers is called a "silky" (a kind of Banty chicken).
- The black and white chickens are Plymouth Rock. Ask your child how they look different.

Further on, there is a large walk-in pen with turkeys, pheasant and quail. A staff member will take the children into the pen for a closer look at these birds.

- Turkey - has a red-skinned head and a piece of hanging skin called a wattle. The dad turkeys (Toms) have a beard of black coarse hair growing from the middle of their chest feathers.
- The Dad pheasants have beautifully colored brown, rust and blue feathers with a white ring of feathers around their necks. That's why they're called ring-neck pheasants. The lady pheasants have less colorful feathers in shades of brown.

Call your child's attention to the differences in feathers.

Meadow

When walking along the path at the edge of the meadow, help your child look for:

- Grasses of different kinds. Are they taller than your child? Shorter? Ask your child to find two grasses that are alike. Then look for two that are different.
- Milkweed pods. These look like small football-shaped pods and inside the seeds resemble a fish. Open the pod to find the seeds in the fall. Milkweed seeds travel in the wind, using white fluff as a parachute. How do they feel?

How Seeds Travel

Seeds have many different ways of spreading to make new plants.

- Some fly with a parachute.
- Some stick onto our clothing or fur and drop off.
- Some drop near the mother plant.
- Some glide in the air like a maple tree seed helicopter.
- Some seed pods pop open and seeds shoot out.

Help your child find different kinds of seeds.

Animal Paths

Near the ground in a grassy area, the grasses may be pushed aside to make a tunnel-like path through the meadow. Ask your child which animal he thinks might use that tunnel. Could a horse go through? Could a worm go through? (Other animals that you might ask about: elephant, rabbit, mouse or fox.)

[Rabbits, fox, mice, raccoons are some of the wild animals in the Little Creek woods and meadows.]

The Log House

A 100-year-old log house was donated to Little Creek to help young children see how people in pioneer days lived. Ask your child to compare the log house to his own home or apartment. Is it bigger or smaller? Is your house made of the same materials? Did you know that in pioneer days they mixed bear hair with mud to fill in (chink) the cracks between the logs?

"Leaves Three - Let It Be"

As you walk through the woods, teach your child to beware of poison ivy. Here is how the leaf looks:

Poison ivy grows as a small plant beside the trail or climbs up the trees as a hairy vine. NEVER TOUCH A HAIRY VINE! In the fall, it turns beautiful colors of red and gold.

Walking the Trail

To help your child focus on specific things, take along a flashlight to shine on tiny objects and in holes, in the ground and trees. Ask your child to predict what kinds of animals might live in that hole—a squirrel, a mouse, a rabbit, a raccoon, an opossum, a fox, a woodchuck. Show them the picture page provided and identify the animals.

As you walk, watch for the dead trees; stop and tell your child the story of the Dead Tree.

> Once a proud tall tree stood in Little Creek woods. A wild and furious storm blew across the woods. (The child can blow like the wind.) Thunder rolled (child can hit his thighs to make thunder), lightning struck (child claps) and the tall tree was hit by lightning. One of its branches fell and some of its bark fell off.
>
> Later, when the sun came out, a woodpecker found the soft spot where the branch fell off. He started to peck holes looking for insects. Soon beetles and other bugs ate the wood of the tall tree, and it started to weaken. A long time passed. More birds and bugs ate at the bark and wood.
>
> Many years later, another terrible storm came to Little Creek with strong winds (child blows). The tree was so weak that the wind blew it to the ground, and it landed with a loud ear-splitting crash.
>
> Before, the tree had been a home for birds, squirrels, and raccoons; but now it helped other small animals—foxes, rabbits, and mice looked for shelter from the fallen tree. Soon more insects, mushrooms and fungus turned it into rich and fertile soil.
>
> One day, a seed landed where the old tree fell and soon a new baby tree was growing to take the place of the proud tall tree.

HELP YOUR CHILD LOOK FOR BABY TREES IN THE WOODS, ESPECIALLY ONES GROWING FROM DEAD TREES.

Pond

At the bottom of the main trail, you will find the pond. Scoop some water out into a clear glass jar so your child can examine the pond water.

You may find:

- water spiders gliding on the pond
- tiny plants (called duck weed)
- tadpoles (baby frogs) some with legs, some with tails

Smell the pond water. Ask how pond water is different from the water your child drinks.

In the Spring, turn over the lily pads on the pond, and you should discover a jelly-like substance (snail eggs). In the Fall and Summer, tiny pond snails can be found. How does a snail feel as it crawls on your child's palm? Look for raccoon paw prints in the soft mud around the pond. Raccoons, as well as other animals and birds, use the pond to drink.

Mississippian Indian House

Many children think Indians live only in teepees. The Indians who lived along the Mississippi River were called Mississippian Indians and they built their homes of logs and grasses and mud. Ask your child to tell you how the mud house and teepee are different.

They are made of different materials. The teepee usually is made of animal skins. The teepee is shaped like a triangle. The mud house is a rectangle.

Inside the mud house, there is a hole in the roof over the fire area. Ask your child to predict why.

Trail Through the Woods

Before you start into the woods, pick out one large tree. Extend your child's vocabulary by talking to him about the parts of a tree. Ask him to:

- hug the tree (explain that he's "hugging" the *trunk)*
- rub his hand over the *rough bark* on the trunk
- look up and see the big *branches*
- look at the end of the branches to see the tiny *twigs*
- find a *leaf* that came from the tree he hugged
- find a *seed* that came from the tree (if possible)
- find a tree *root*

As you walk in the woods, point out:

- different kinds of leaves—how are they different?
- different colors and sizes of leaves
- different shades of green in the leaves
- bark, twigs, roots

In the fall, the orange fruit high in the trees near the pond are persimmon fruits. Some people say you can predict the winter weather by slicing open a persimmon seed:

If you find a spoon shape, it will snow.
If you find a knife shape, it will be cold.
If you find a fork shape, it will be mild.

Teach your child this little poem:

Way up high in the persimmon tree *(arms up)*

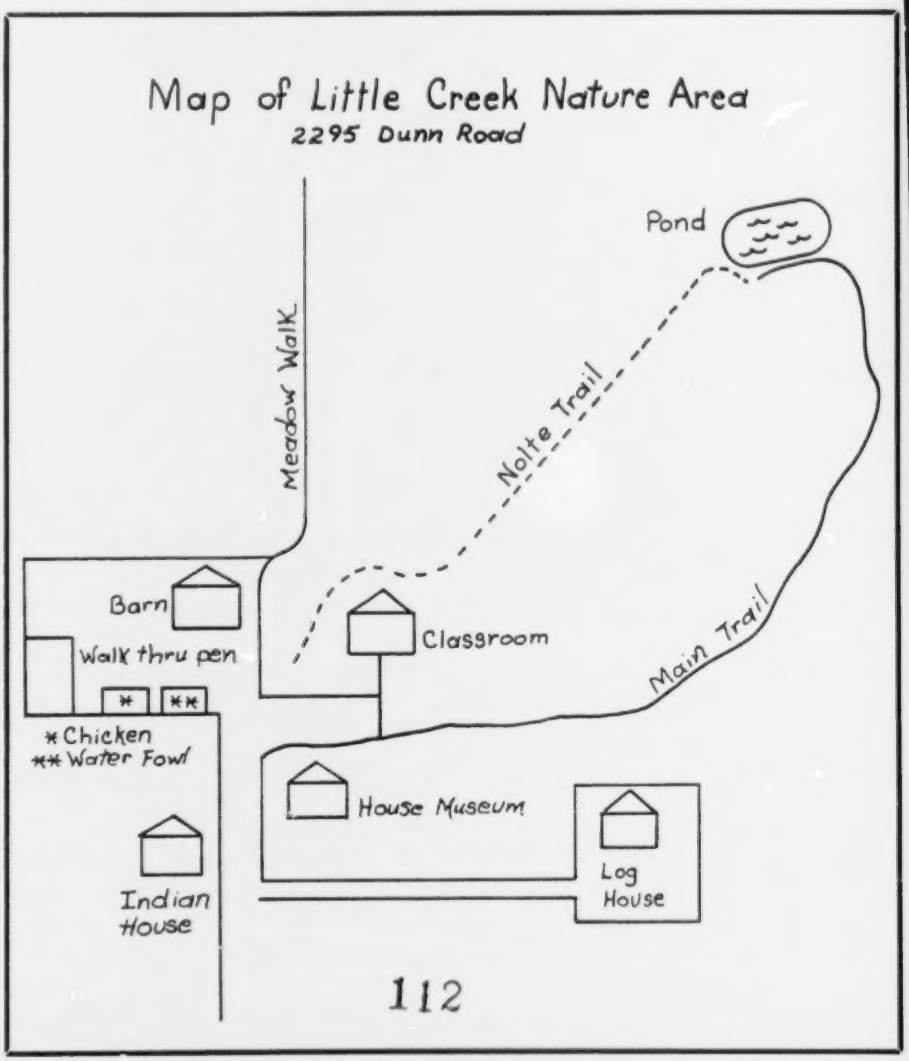
Two little persimmons smiled at me. *(make 2 circles with fingers)*

I shook that tree as hard as I could *(pretend to shake tree)*

Down came the persimmons *(move fingers down)*

Boy, did they taste yucky! *(make a yucky face)*

Persimmons are very bitter if you eat them before the first frost in the fall. Opossums love persimmons!



Follow-up Activities To Little Creek

The best way for your child to hold onto new learning and make it part of his life is to represent it, in some physical way, by talking about it, drawing what he's learned, or acting out what he has done. These follow-up activities will help your child remember the concepts he's learned about the nature area and apply that learning in a new situation—like his own back yard.

Map Making

Help your child draw a map of his trip to Little Creek. First, talk about the places he visited as he walked. Cut open a large paper bag and use a crayon to help your child draw the trail. Then, using twigs, rocks, grass and flowers, try to represent what you saw. What could you use to represent trees? Three dimensional trees can be made by sticking twigs in play-dough. Your child may have other ideas, too. What could you use for the pond, the barn, the animals?

Bark Rubbings

Some of the new words your child learned were trunk and bark. Take some newspaper or old paper grocery sacks and crayons out to your back yard. Place the paper against the tree and rub. A copy of the bark pattern should appear on the paper. Try out many tree rubbings and talk about how the bark looks and feels different. Use the new words "bark" and "trunk" as you and your child rub.

Nature Diary

When you return home, ask your child to tell you what he remembers about his trip. What did he like best? *Print* your child's answers at the bottom of the page. That will save room for your child to draw a picture about what he said. You may have to help him remember all his experiences by asking questions: "What did we see when we went into the barn?" (Remember talking and drawing about new learning makes it a part of the child's life in a deeper, richer way.)

Adopt A Tree

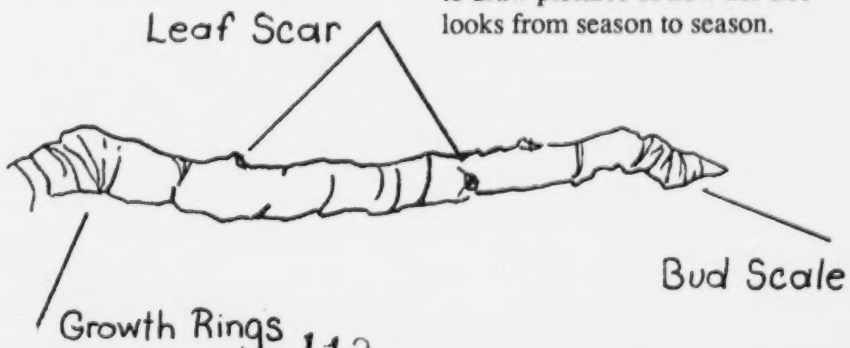
Help your child find a special tree in your yard or neighborhood that the two of you can observe many times throughout the year. This tree should be one that has branches low enough for your child to look at closely. Tell him that this is going to be his own special tree that he is going to watch all year long and notice how it changes. Talk about:

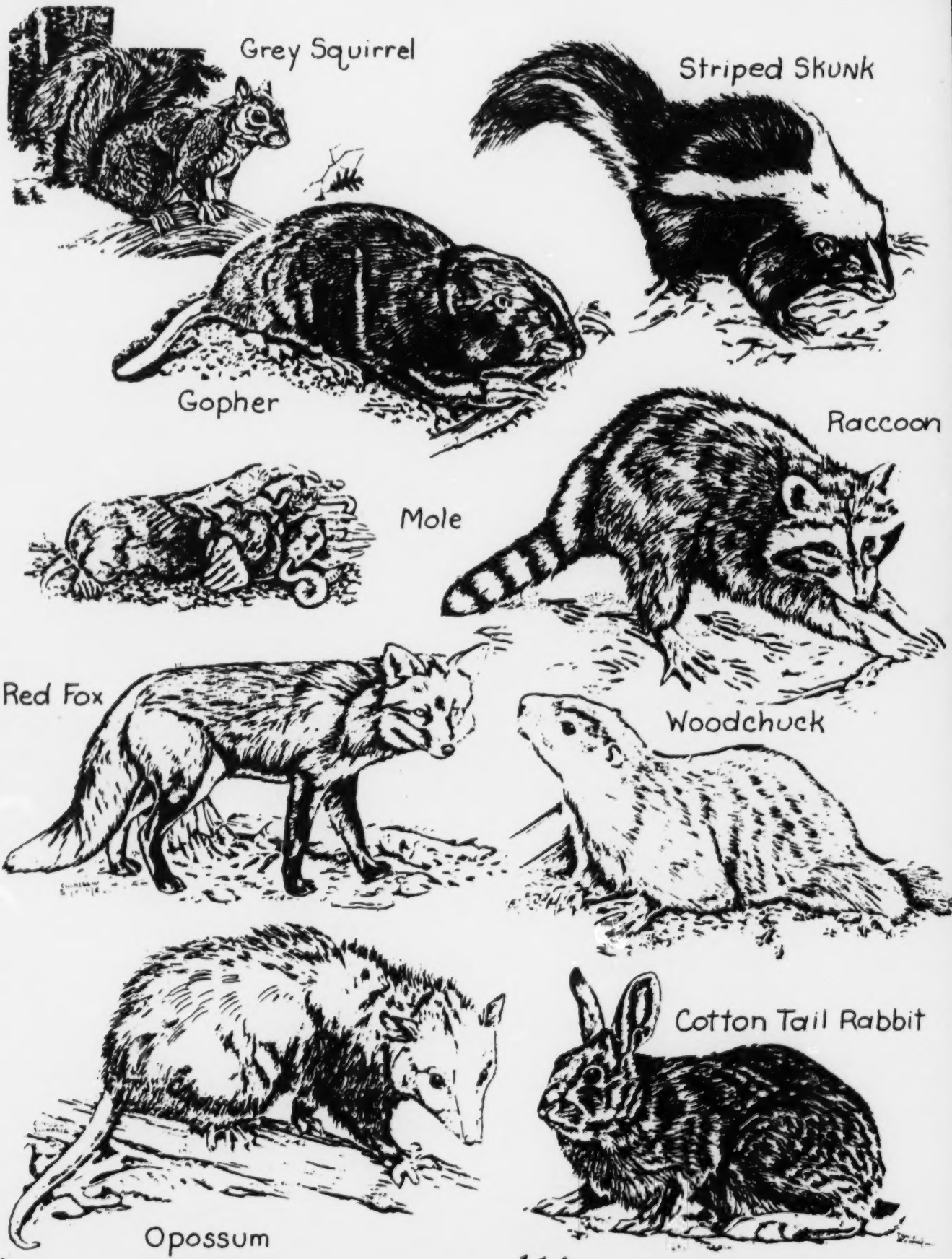
- Why trees are important to us (provide shade; wood for furniture, shelter, paper; fruit that we like to eat, etc.).
- What animals may live in or around the tree (squirrels, birds, insects, etc.). Does he notice any signs of animal life?
- The parts of the tree. What shape are its leaves or needles? Can you see any roots? Why are they important? How does the bark feel? Is it rough or smooth? Are any fruits or seeds growing on the tree now?
- The size of the tree. Can your child reach her arms around the trunk? If not, can the two of you reach around it? How tall is your tree? Can you think of anything the same height?

Pick out a branch that is at your child's eye level and tie a bright ribbon or piece of yarn on it so you will be able to find it for other observations. Help your child focus on the parts that you see at different times of the year. It is easy to notice the beauty of the leaves, but we are not always aware of how the buds form. They begin to form in autumn after the leaves drop and can be studied throughout the winter. The buds of each kind of tree have their own shape and design. You may also help your child find the leaf scar and bud scales (see picture).

Is there anything else growing on this branch? It is the fruits, seeds and dormant insects that keep many birds alive in the winter.

You may want to provide a booklet to record your child's observation of his special tree during the year. She may want to draw pictures of how her tree looks from season to season.




Grey Squirrel
Striped Skunk
Gopher
Raccoon
Mole
Red Fox
Woodchuck
Opossum
Cotton Tail Rabbit